Week ending October 8 1949

Every Thursday Threepence

John Bull

MY LIFE by WILFRED PICKLES

begins on page 7

"THREE CHEERS FOR WISK"

It gets whites dazzling!

NO WONDER women everywhere vote overwhelmingly for Wisk. It's just what they have long needed on washday—a coupon-free washing powder that can tackle the BIG WASH.

Wisk does the fine things, of course. But—think of it!—Wisk gets the heavy, dirty things brilliantly clean as well. All the sheets, towels, tablecloths, overalls, aprons, shirts, children's things, that eat up your soap coupons every Monday.

Wisk lathers like the best soap powder. And remember, the more you whip it up the more freely it lathers. Wisk dissolves in a jiffy and rinses out easily. What's more, you get no scum, even in the hardest water!

Buy Wisk for next washday. You've a treat in store! You use it just as you would a soap powder. (But don't mix Wisk with soap, soap powder, or soap flakes; soap and Wisk don't work well together.) You'll love the grand job Wisk does. And you'll love it because it is safe for your hands. Ask at your shop for Wisk. No coupons needed. *Available in England and Wales*

WISK does so much MORE!

A *LEVER* PRODUCT

WS 11-828

It isn't enough to LOOK clean...

free your pores of your WORK-WEARY SELF!

Charm depends on more than just *looking* clean. You've got to be sure that your work-weary self has been washed right out of your pores. When you use LIFEBUOY, you can be certain there's nothing left to spoil the good impression you make on others. Its lather is specially blended to wash away all unpleasant reminders of exertion. Then you know you're FRESH IN EVERY PORE!

LBT 691-1014

LIFEBUOY
Toilet Soap

makes you FRESH IN EVERY PORE

A *LEVER* PRODUCT

Prompt relief *from* **ACIDITY...**

. . . . . can be counted on when 'Milk of Magnesia'* is ready to hand in the Medicine Cabinet. This quick acting antacid is especially comforting should you ever eat or drink unwisely, smoke too much or sit up too late. Being also a most effective laxative, 'Milk of Magnesia' will relieve the system—leaving you feeling clear-headed and so much fitter.

'Milk of Magnesia'

REGD. TRADE MARK*

Large size 3/2—equals 3 small size 1/7

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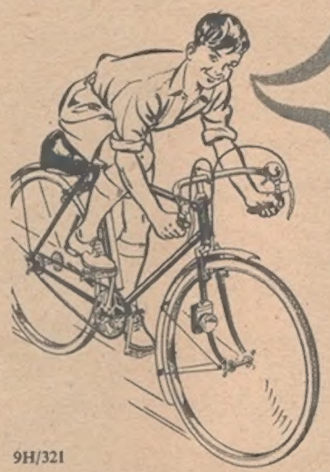

"DUNLOP TYRES for me -dad says they're best!"

9H/321

Will it be a RHEUMATISM Winter?

THE season of draughts and queues in the rain is not so very far away. Will this mean for you a repetition of last year's rheumatism? Winter means misery for thousands of middle-aged folk who have not yet discovered how rheumatic pain can be overcome.

Grandpa Kruschen says:

"MAKE KRUSCHEN A WINTER RESOLUTION"

One of the most common causes of rheumatism may very often be traced to impurities in the system. In middle-age nature often needs assistance to expel these. Kruschen can provide this help. Kruschen is no ordinary laxative. It is six specially blended salts. These work in two ways—aperient and diuretic—thus helping the body to expel the impurities through the natural channels. The little daily dose of Kruschen prevents these poisons forming again. Why not enjoy this Kruschen freedom from pain.

Kruschen costs 1/4 and 2/4 (Powder or Crystals) at Chemists and Grocers. The 2/4 size will last you twice as long.

Thousands thank KRUSCHEN

NOW IMPROVED CREAM DEODORANT

safely STOPS underarm PERSPIRATION

1. Does not irritate skin.
2. Does not rot dresses or men's shirts.
3. Prevents odour. Safely stops perspiration for 1 to 3 days.
4. Pure, white, greaseless, vanishing.
5. No waiting to dry. Can be used right after shaving.

Arrid 2/5 a jar

Supplies are rather better now, and you've a good chance of being able to get Arrid from your chemist, hairdresser, or local store. You'll find the new improved Arrid has been worth waiting for.

I'D NEVER DO FOR A POSTMAN

People with hot, tired, aching feet aren't much good for any job, let alone a postman's. Luckily for them there's always a quick and effective road to relief.

Reudel Bath Salts provide a ready answer to all your foot troubles. They are based on a highly concentrated formula, specially prepared to produce a ready-made mineral water impregnated with mineral alkali. They reproduce the essential therapeutic constituents of the waters at Carlsbad and Aix les Bains—in your home. Reudel Bath Salts are wonderfully tonic in the bath—with a refreshing pine element—and **triple oxygenated** to increase the cleansing, toning-up effect of the water, and promote easy elimination of impurities through the pores.

'REUDEL' BATH SALTS

EDITORIAL

Two ways to stop jail disorders

AN ALARMING SITUATION has developed inside prisons all over Britain. Discontent among staffs, disorder among prisoners, and gross overcrowding everywhere are worse rather than better than a year ago. Nobody has done very much about this, so far, and it seems that nothing effective is planned.

M.P.s should tackle the Home Secretary about the report which the Prison Commissioners have just issued. This is a dull and uninspiring document, offering no real remedies for the basic causes of the trouble in our jails.

Lack of space (due to a postwar increase in the average prison population from 13,000 to 20,000) and lack of staff are the two big difficulties.

Men of the right type don't want to work in a prison when they can get plenty of equally well-paid jobs in much pleasanter places. And the present state of the prisons does not encourage the recruitment of new staff. Riots are frequent, and attacks on warders deplorably common.

At Wandsworth Prison, warders are learning Judo—the Japanese art of self-defence—to protect themselves against the brutality of criminals sentenced for acts of violence and quite undeterred by fear of further punishment.

Parkhurst, Wormwood Scrubbs, Manchester, Durham and Gloucester are among many other prisons where officers now have to go about their duties alert against attack.

IT is not the old lag who starts these ugly incidents in the prisons, as a rule, though he may sometimes be caught up in them. It is the postwar gangster, the young tough who has not merely overcrowded the jails but has brought a new and evil spirit into them.

The women's prisons are fortunately an exception to this. Although great publicity is given to any incident at Holloway, for example, the truth is that conditions there have actually improved. There are fewer inmates than immediately after the war, and their morale is good, on the whole.

In the absence of one of those rare waves of mass-hysteria which sweep through women's prisons—due more to boredom and emotional strain than anything else—physical violence is very uncommon.

There is a very different problem in the men's prisons.

The Prison Officers' Association has this year described the perpetual war of prisoners upon warders as the worst and most brutal ever experienced. Its members complain of prison toughs who gain the leadership of their fellows, try to get themselves hero-worshipped, and brag of their violence openly. It is the Association's view that these ruffians are no longer adequately punished. Stricter discipline, and heavy punishment swiftly applied would, say the prison officers, greatly reduce the dangers they have to run.

This suggested policy would of course run counter to the whole trend of modern prison reform, which is towards reclaiming prisoners by mild and reasonable treatment rather than hardening them by savage punishment. No one can quarrel with such humanitarian intentions—but it is possible that some of the reformers might amend their theories if they were forced into daily contact with desperadoes.

WHATEVER policy the Prison Commissioners adopt will be difficult to carry out effectively while the present staff shortage remains. They have already explained what they are up against.

A drive to recruit 1,700 extra men officers and 170 women fizzled out with a net addition to staffs of 284 men and twenty women. Yet that year the prison population increased by nearly 3,000!

Violent criminals despise weakness of any kind, including deficiencies in the strength of their uniformed guardians. They are bullies by nature; and like other bullies they are at once overawed and suppressed by superior force.

Therefore, one conclusion for Mr. Chuter Ede is that, somehow or other, prison staffs must be increased. The recruiting drive which failed before will have to be renewed.

All the other prison problems are intensified by that of overcrowding, which makes it easier for bad men further to corrupt beginners in crime. And besides being overcrowded, many of our prisons are completely out of date. They are not fit even for murderers—let alone for the thousands of mild offenders subjected to their depressing and demoralizing atmosphere.

So there is another essential measure to be taken if prison reform, as envisaged in last year's Criminal Justice Act, is ever to become a reality. That is, to tear down the worst of the old prisons, and to build enough new ones to fit the present criminal population.

This might mean interfering to a small extent with the national building programme, which has always left criminals at the bottom of the priority list. But it has to be remembered that prisoners are not the only people who have to live in prisons—and that the nation owes a duty to the staffs who, in spite of grumbles, carry on loyally with their unpleasant and often dangerous jobs.

JOHN BULL 189 HIGH HOLBORN LONDON W.C.1
OCTOBER 8, 1949 VOLUME 86 NUMBER 2258 PHONE: TEMPLE BAR 2468 GRAMS: HEROICALLY, WESTCENT, LONDON

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A wine is not necessarily good because you can't pronounce its name or afford its price. The only judge of a wine that you can trust is your own palate. More and more people today—connoisseurs as well as ordinary men—are enjoying the fine flavour of Emu Australian Wines, the wines whose excellence you can always rely on and whose prices most can afford. Ask your wine merchant about them.

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The literary critic,
Mr. Oliver P. Otis,
Has written a quite charming
and enthusiastic notice
*On Jamaica Rum's new booklet *;*
its list of novel potions
Are, so he says, exactly in accordance
with his notions;
And he adds (we quote): "Jamaica Rum
will be a real best cellar."
(Mr. Otis always was a very, very witty fellar).

*Send for *your* copy of the new booklet on Jamaica Rum. Please write to: 'Jamaica Jo,' (Dept. J.B.2) 40, Norfolk Street, Strand, W.C.2.

A bottle goes such a very long way!

It's wonderful what Jamaica Rum will do!

Mother... protect young teeth against mouth acid!

Here's a way to protect young teeth against the damage often caused by mouth acidity. Many foods and sweets produce acids which soon attack the delicate enamel if not checked in time.

To correct this mouth acidity, many dentists advise * 'Milk of Magnesia', contained only in one toothpaste—PHILLIPS' Dental Magnesia. Its mild, delightful flavour makes children eager to use it regularly—forming a habit which is the best safeguard during these early, important years.

1/4 *per tube*
Extra large 2/3

* *'Milk of Magnesia' is the trade mark of Phillips' preparation of magnesia.*

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SALAD CREAM
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THE CREAM OF SALAD CREAMS

As the days go by — you feel the good health that comes from drinking

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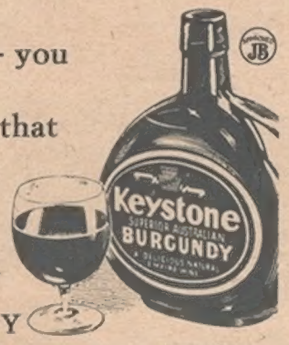
AUSTRALIAN BURGUNDY



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Keystone's rare virtues make every meal a banquet
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See how they grow!

They're always proud of how tall they are getting, but unless they are evenly nourished their upward growth may be at the expense of something else.

Even growth — of strong bone and healthily rounded body — is the great boon that SevenSeaS Cod Liver Oil brings to the young. For this sea-fresh food has all the plus values — fats, calories and vitamins — that make sure they never outgrow their strength.

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SEA-FRESH FOOD
Obtainable from all chemists, oil from 1/6, capsules from 1/9

FOR LINOLEUM WOOD FLOORS AND FURNITURE
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HYGIENIC WAX
POLISH
FOR BRIGHT AND HEALTHY HOMES

Tins 9d., 1/4 and 4/3
Chiswick Products Ltd., London, W.4.

"Is this your bright idea, Willie?"
"Yes, Mother!—you asked us to remind you to get some Mansion Polish when you went shopping. You said you could never get along without it."

For dark woods use 'DARK MANSION'.

FOR FLOORS, FURNITURE AND LINOLEUM

MP/VE

Free Speech

TWINS WITHOUT A FUSS

MY NIECE, WHO HAS just had twins—two lovely girls—told me that she had them at home without any sort of artificial aid or assistance. Ten minutes between each birth. She is twenty-seven and these are her first children. She assured me that she had an excellent time and everything went off well.

What a striking contrast is this quite ordinary case to the many others where so much harmful fuss is made over what is, after all, something quite natural. Pity all mothers don't look upon childbirth as a source of joy and delight.—E. W. S., Dovercourt.

Seeing Life Abroad

HERE IS THE WAY to study a foreign country. I have just finished walking across Spain from the French border to Gibraltar, trying to live on the twenty-five pesetas (five shillings) a day which is the wage of the average Spaniard.

I am left with an immense sympathy for the people of Spain.—JOHN WALKER, 43 Beaumont Road, Leicester.

Doubling The Price

ON a visit to a Scottish seaside resort, I went into a toyshop and saw some paper parasols marked sixpence each. Before I had been served, a woman came in and told the shopkeeper: "There's a trip in from Glasgow."

Immediately the price ticket was taken off the parasols and one marked a shilling was put on instead. This sort of thing should be stopped.—J. G., Stirlingshire.

Everyone Was Helpless

PASSING through a busy thoroughfare at lunchtime, I saw a man fall. What was wrong? A stroke? A fit? A heart attack? Nobody knew. What was the best thing to do? Nobody knew that either. Everyone just stared helplessly at the man on the pavement.

It is only in an emergency that we realize the tragedy of not knowing something about first-aid. This should be a compulsory subject in all school curricula. — MISS N. LEAVER, 285 Litherland Road, Bootle, Liverpool.

Wisdom In The Nude

NUDIST SOCIETIES come in for much unfair criticism. When I first joined a camp, I did feel a little nervous, but my uneasiness was soon dispelled. The members were of all ages and occupations: fine, healthy, sociable people—no cranks. They soon had me swimming and playing tennis, and I have made some really good friends.

I had decided to join the movement after an illness. At the time it seemed an extreme measure. My revived health and spirits have shown me it was one of the wisest steps I have ever taken.—S. J., Southport.

Customers Under Fire

As a small shopkeeper, I support the letter "from behind the counter" on clean food ("Free Speech," September 3). The habits of customers leave much to be desired.

Mothers think nothing of sitting a child on a food counter. Loaves are given to babies in prams to gnaw; handkerchiefs are tucked into shopping baskets. And the baby's used napkin goes on top of a loaf in the pram basket.

Let the women who complain about dirty tradesmen think over some of their own habits.—SHOPKEEPER, Essex.

Magicians' Secrets

CONJURING is the second oldest profession in the world to be ruined by amateurs. Thank you for Dennis Holman's article, "Magician's Parlour" (JOHN BULL, September 3), describing magical apparatus manufactured by Jack Hughes. The article will enable your readers to appreciate the difference between the individual conjurer, whose effects are obtained by sleight of hand, and the performer whose skill is supplemented by toyshop tricks. — LOUIS HERTEL, Brook House Country Club, Binstead, Isle of Wight.

. . . Do you think you are playing the game by exposing to all and sundry the secrets of the profession? Conjurers earn their living by mystifying the public and if you blow the gaff on how the rabbit comes out of the hat the audience will lose a lot of entertainment.—FREDERICK CHARLES SMITH, 120 Holland Street, Glasgow.

*** *Dennis Holman writes: The man in the street IS interested in how it is done and it is not a writer's job to safeguard the secrets of the magicians—secrets which I obtained without subterfuge or breach of confidence. There are also some magicians who believe that articles such as mine only serve as a stimulus for the invention of new and better tricks.*

Checking On Your M.P.

YOUR editorial "Is Your M.P. Good At His Job?" (JOHN BULL, September 10) should be studied by all who have a vote. One way of finding out is to buy the weekly issues of Hansard which show what your M.P. has been doing, what he has to say and how he has voted.—JOHN T. BARNES, 47 Fox Street, Edgeley, Stockport.

. . . One reform is badly needed. It concerns the M.P. who crosses the floor of the House. He should be compelled to seek re-election.—B. N. HYMAN, 106 Clapton Common, London, E.5.

Disappearing Farmworkers

FARMERS are being very short-sighted, it seems to me. For a week I have been a helper on a farm of 200 acres being worked by only two regular labourers, both over fifty-five. The harvest was gathered by the two regulars, two schoolboys, a man of seventy-three and two volunteers.

As I see it, there will be no regular farm workers at all in a few years' time. There cannot be many people willing to take on a job where they have to work twelve hours per day for six and sometimes seven days a week. The old hands are doing a marvellous job but they cannot go on for ever.—S. NORTHOVER, 162 Elgin Avenue, London, W.9.

John Bull welcomes readers' views, experiences and ideas for publication. A guinea is paid for every letter used. Mark the envelope "Free Speech" and make sure your full name and address is in the letter.

HE KNOWS

SMITHS ALARMS

RULE THE ROOST

British-made handwound Smiths Alarms are such firm *masters* of reluctant risers and *masterpieces* of reliability, style and value. Be glad to own one! Sold by Smiths recognised stockists everywhere and guaranteed for twelve months.

★ *If you are on A.C. Mains do not fail to see the Smiths "Sectric" Autocal, the world's finest Alarm, which "never forgets to reset itself!"*

NEW DAWN *Non-Luminous* **17/5** plus 4/1 P.T.
Luminous **20/11** plus 4/10 P.T.

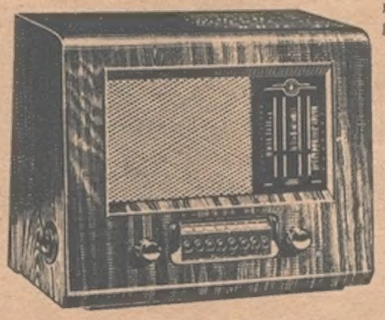
SMITHS ENGLISH CLOCKS LTD. The Clock and Watch Division of S. Smith & Sons (England) Ltd

CHRISTOPHER STONE *says:*

BUSH RADIO

gives value for money

Your idea of value and mine may differ, for after all no two people see things in quite the same light — what a dull world it would be, if they did! Even so, I feel pretty confident that you will have been impressed by the high value consistently offered by Bush. I like particularly this aristocrat of radios — the PB. 12 at £27 — and I know Bush dealers share my view. They're always ready to give you a demonstration!



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JB S.R. keeps teeth safe as well as white by keeping gums healthy. That's because it contains sodium ricinoleate which many dentists themselves use. S.R. penetrates the gums and stimulates resistance to disease. See your dentist twice a year and use S.R. twice a day. *1/4 and 2/- inc. tax.*

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FROM 18/- PER BOTTLE

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SWIFT RELIEF from AUTUMN CHILLS

Colds, 'Flu, Feverishness

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"Stop the feverishness and you stop the chill." That's why 'ASPRO' is so successful in dealing with feverish conditions. It checks the rising temperature and swiftly restores it to normal. **You feel relief almost immediately.** The development of a troublesome cold or 'flu attack is arrested. Watery eyes, grogginess and sneezing are promptly dispelled. Two or three 'ASPRO' tablets with a hot drink on retiring and you'll feel "as right as rain" in the morning. **'ASPRO' is an anti-pyretic or fever-reducer.** It does its good work by promoting a mild perspiration overnight, helping Nature to **eliminate** the poison causes of illness from the system through the action of the skin. The important point is that

PRICES: 4D. 7½D. 1/5

ASPRO REG. TRADE MARK

'ASPRO' dispels colds in one night

Made by ASPRO LIMITED, Slough, Bucks

Soap coupons gave clue to whiteness

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WOMEN HAD TO TAKE WHAT THEY COULD GET—
NOW NEW MILLIONS AGREE
PERSIL WASHES WHITER

COULD IT BE TRUE...

that Persil really did wash whiter? Now she's one of the convinced new millions of Persil fans

NOT long ago we took a trip to find out just what you housewives think about Persil. We talked to hundreds of you in every part of the country. Well, the enthusiasm nearly bowled us over!

In more than half the households Persil was *first choice for whiteness!*

During the soap shortage, you ladies just had to use any soap powder you could get. One kind or another. You tried everything in the shops. And this certainly convinced you that Persil washes whiter.

Today, Persil has added millions of new fans to the millions who used it before! Our survey indicates that more than half the nation's housewives*—over 7,000,000 women—say Persil washes whiter.

How white is white?

Any housewife knows that there are many shades of white, but only the whitest is good enough for her things.

Just put a Persil-washed article next to one washed with any other product. Your eyes will tell you that Persil-white is the whitest white.

In copper or washtub, Persil's way with the white wash is spectacular! Persil suds are thick, rich, thorough-acting, and form no scum, even if you're using hard water.

Persil's own energetic oxygen bubbles chase the dirt out completely and safely, leaving white things satisfyingly clean, supremely white.

Getting your share of Persil

Even though there is more Persil about, the demand is still far ahead of supply. Do continue to ask for Persil, but, if you're unlucky, please be patient. Your shopkeeper will go on doing his best to get Persil for you.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

A 1939 Persil picture. What a contrast between those frocks! Persil did it then—Persil does it now. That's why, after trying everything they could get, new millions name Persil as top whiteness-getter!

***7 million women now say**

PERSIL WASHES WHITER!

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EXCLUSIVE JOHN BULL FEATURE

Wilfred Pickles (left), Mabel, his wife, and Barney Colehan aboard the ship from Ireland that left stirring *Have a Go!* memories in its wake

MY LIFE by Wilfred Pickles

John Bull presents the autobiography of radio's greatest personality

MABEL, BARNEY AND I were standing against the deck-rail, looking back over the slight swell towards the lights of Belfast, now rapidly losing their individuality and merging into a thin white line in the distance. We were leaving Ireland and the village of Glynn, with its thatched and white-washed cottages.

We were leaving the tiny village hall, lit only by oil lamps and packed with the whole population of two hundred and fifty, except for the fourteen children who were all in bed.

We were leaving Wilfred Bell, the plump, clear-eyed village schoolmaster, who had explained his original methods of teaching, of cultivating the youngsters' artistic tendencies. After the broadcast he had shown me the lovely paintings created by some of his pupils, and read from the wonderful poems he had encouraged them to write.

"Wilfred Bell was marvellous," said Mabel.

"Make great radio," agreed Barney Colehan, our producer.

"This is his *Have a Go!*," I said. And then it struck me that each programme was becoming a small memorial to somebody.

Each seemed to uncover so much that was good in human nature, the services and sacrifices of ordinary people. Each seemed to offer an antidote to all our worries about the sickness of the world.

I shall never forget the courageous, lofty-spirited Dutch boy I interviewed in a programme from a military hospital. There he stood, this fighter, who had lost both hands in the war: tall, fair-haired, straight and broad-shouldered, struggling with the language to tell us all in his broken English how he was walking down Manchester's Piccadilly with an English girl friend when she said: "You're pulling my leg."

And how he replied in all seriousness: "But your leg—I don't touch your leg!"

He had been fitted with a special contraption to be used as fingers. How gladdening it was to see his face shine as he explained how he had learned to type! After the broadcast he was offered a job as a Dutch correspondent with an English firm.

Months later he wrote to me, saying: "Your programme was the turning point in my life. I have a good job. I am very happy. And now I am getting married to the girl I love—and she is a Dutch girl."

And he concluded: "We hope you and Mrs. Pickles will come to our wedding."

Then there was sprightly Dicky Richardson.

Dicky had lost his sight as well as his fingers, but he was, nevertheless, the life and soul of our broadcast from St. Dunstan's. Said

Pickles's father and mother today. "A reight funny 'un," they used to say of jovial, witty Pickles senior

Wilfred returns to his birthplace, 24 Conway Street, Halifax, where the Pickleses "hung together with the loyalty typical of the big, to-tea-on-Sunday families of the northern mill towns"

Dicky: "I've had a new nose grafted on."

"Where did they get the skin from?" I asked.

"Off my chest," said Dicky.

"If you grow hairs on your chest you'll be growing hairs on your nose."

"I am already," he chuckled.

When he told us he was getting married and wanted to start up in business, I said: "You start up, Dicky, and I'll be your first customer."

And the day after the broadcast I received a postcard. "Dear Mr. Pickles," I read. "I listen to all your broadcasts but last night's was the one I enjoyed most of all. Thank you so much." It was signed: "Dicky's Mother."

The same week there arrived from a woman who insisted on remaining anonymous, a letter enclosing a cheque for £500 with the request that I should pass it on to St. Dunstan's for the purpose of setting up two boys in business.

It was uplifting to see so much courage at St. Dunstan's and we saw more of it as we took *Have a Go!* among the wounded, the sick, the aged and the orphaned. We saw the determination of blinded and limbless war veterans, the majority of them in their early twenties; the faith and hope of these wonderful folk and their great joy in the expectation of being able to contribute to the running of the country.

I Wish They Could Meet

I have often wanted to be able to transplant all my hale and healthy audiences among these people. I have seen how the Other Half lives: the Other Half being so many different communities with so many different occupations and so many different standards of living, habits and hobbies, as well as so many disabilities—and yet so much courage and so sharp a sense of humour.

How much better things would be if everybody in Britain—and indeed the world—would go and meet and talk to the Other Half!

And thinking of hale and healthy audiences, I recall the one in Wales which rocked with merriment when a robust Welsh woman, bubbling with the joy of living, answered my question, "If you could entertain somebody for three days, who would you pick?" with "Well, Wilfred, somebody with a very small appetite."

I think, too, of the sturdy fisherfolk of Looe in Cornwall. It was there that the sun-tanned soldier's wife told me the story of their move into new quarters in an Army barracks.

With a relish that added to the piquancy of her tale, she went on to describe how she heard the door open and saw a man come in.

"I looked up at him," she went on, "and I thought: 'My, our Jim's altered a bit since this morning!' Then I saw it wasn't Jim at all!"

She paused, then added: "But that wasn't all. You see, I was in my smalls!" . . .

Ours Was A Big Family

People have fascinated me ever since that childhood day of discovery when I became aware of the number of folks in my family and of their differences of characters.

I have no doubt that most of my relatives weren't far away on that grey October morning in 1904 when I was delivered in a small bedroom of the soot-blackened working-class home, 24 Conway Street, Halifax, Yorkshire; for the family hung together with that unspoken loyalty so typical of the big, to-tea-on-Sunday families of the northern mill towns.

Conway Street is today still a drab thoroughfare, paved with stone setts, its back-to-back houses sheltering so many people that now I wonder how they can find space to move, let alone live individual lives. As a child I wasn't conscious of being engulfed by it all, but all the same I used to love to steal off to the attic, push up the window in the roof, and stand on a box looking out over the sea of dark blue slates—often with my brother Arthur, who was three years older than I.

In spite of our poverty, my father, a journeyman stonemason, kept up a brave, impressive front.

Just before I was born he shovelled in somebody's load of coal to earn two shillings.

As I visualize him, he looked rather like I am now. He had a ruddier complexion and a rougher, more untidy appearance. This was deceptive, for even in the worst days of our family's economic troubles he showed a lively wit that made him the immediate centre of attraction in any company.

He was a good mixer, a jovial man with a gift for storytelling that kept him out too late and in men's company too long. "Ay, 'e's a reight funny 'un, is Fred Pickles," they used to say.

He was impetuous, too. When the summer holidays came round he would say, as he had said all through the year: "We can't afford to go away." Then, suddenly, he would burst in to announce: "We're going to Blackpool!"

How exciting were those hours on the Saturday morning when we all set out for the station and eventually mingled with hundreds of other folk all bent on the same sort of holiday.

There were the fathers, still cool in their open-necked shirts as they trundled along with their families' belongings. The mothers were usually dressed in light cotton flowered frocks and were laden with coats and mackintoshes, while the youngsters tripped along with buckets and spades.

Year in, year out, the scene was the same: the second week in August may have been full of important national and international events, but to Halifax it was Wakes Week and nothing else!

First To Sight Tower

I rarely left my stand at the carriage window and I was always the first to report the climax of the journey—the sight of Blackpool Tower! I reached a fever pitch of excitement as we walked off the station and gulped the sharp salt air into our lungs.

"Oh, look at all the people!" I exclaimed. And there before me were the open horse-drawn landaus that looked as if they were made for kings, and from the front could be heard the rattle of those never-to-be-forgotten trams.

Bedtime came early on that first Saturday evening in "digs" and my spirits sagged as I was packed off to a strange room with its old and ornate furniture and a night-light flickering in a water-filled saucer. I stayed awake until I heard the creak of the stairs and strange voices as the visitors made their way to bed.

Everyone Was Too Polite

I prayed for Monday to come quickly, for Sunday meant that awful silence at meals with everybody asking in whispers for the salt to be passed, and scared lest their stomachs should rumble. Each of the three or four families kept to themselves and everybody was too polite. I felt guilty when I crunched my roast potato, for the noise from my mouth seemed to shatter the silence.

Gradually the conversation developed, just as it had done, according to the story, in the "digs" when a little boy said: "Mother, I want to go to the back."

"All right, luv," said his mother, "but it's not at the back. It's upstairs on t'landing."

Quietness descended on the company again. Then came the piercing voice of the little boy from upstairs. "Mother!" he called urgently.

"What is it, luv?"

"I can see the Tower while I'm on t'closet!"

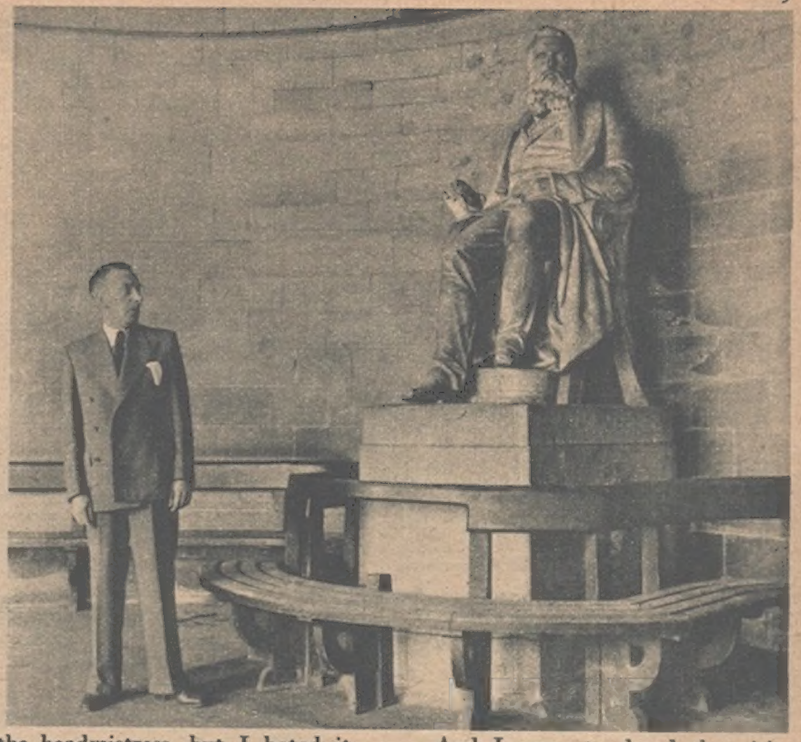
All too soon the week of paradise was over, we were saying goodbye to everybody and the new arrivals were appearing, all fresh and tidy with their neatly packed cases and baskets.

Going back, I rarely looked out of the window. Restlessly, I would look at everybody in the compartment and feel glad that at least in my shoes there was some Blackpool sand.

I couldn't bring myself to throw it away, even when my mother revealed to me another souvenir—a stick of gaudy Blackpool rock. In her bag, too, was another memento: a small china model of the Big Wheel, inscribed, as always, "A Present from Blackpool."

My mother was of a very different nature to my father. She was quieter and more reserved. Her strict upbringing left its mark.

My maternal grandmother was left a



Left: Parkinson Lane School. "Perhaps it was the railings, perhaps it was the headmistress, but I hated it. . . . And I came to dread the visits to St. Hilda's Church almost as much. . . . Then there was the marble statue of the Halifax M.P., Frank Crossley. It used to frighten me to death"

widow at thirty-nine with seven children to bring up, five of them daughters. She had come from Derbyshire to marry a Lancashire man and they had fled during the cotton famine over the border to the West Riding. Margaret, my mother, was sent to the Bluecoats Orphanage School in Halifax.

Her training, I am sure, narrowed her outlook. During my boyhood days, Sunday in our home was a dismal day which I dreaded and loathed. I don't think I was ever so bored as I was on those Sundays, with their unchanging routine of St. Hilda's Church in the morning, Sunday School in the afternoon and often church at night.

This unswerving Sabbatarianism included a dreary Sunday evening stroll when my mother and father would stop to talk to people they knew and I stood about, impatiently shifting from one foot to the other, tired and bored with the whole thing.

I came to dread these visits to St. Hilda's Church almost as much as I feared Parkinson Lane Council School, where the redoubtable Miss Helliwell, a forbidding woman dressed all in black and wearing a frightening gold chain that gave her an almost regal air so that one thought in a flash of Queen Victoria, ruled as no headmaster or headmistress could ever expect to rule today.

I knew Miss Helliwell by sight long before it came my turn to go for lessons. To my mind, she *was* Parkinson Lane Council School, just as were its ugly iron railings, which surrounded the mass of hideous blackened stone.

Perhaps it was the railings, perhaps it was Miss Helliwell; but whatever it was, I refused to go to school.

My first contact with Miss Helliwell wasn't long in coming. At that time I was in no mood to appreciate her intrusion on my behalf, an intervention which, if I had considered it, would have seemed to me quite out of character.

For my mother had decided on old-fashioned methods of getting me to school. She was strapping my behind all the way along Conway Street when the austere figure of the headmistress appeared. She stopped, drew herself up and frowned.

"That's no way to bring a child to school," she scolded.

"You don't know 'im," said my mother.

My hatred for school never wavered from that day onwards.

Yet I was never at the bottom of the class and, by the time I was eight, I was already a devoted reader, happy to sit near the fire in the evenings, reading stories such as *Treasure Island*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Robinson Crusoe*. These books were practical rewards for regular attendance at Sunday School.

> In this first instalment of his autobiography, Pickles tells of his childhood; of his parents—father loved spinning stories; of grandmother and aunts—all of them such real characters

I Read For Aunt Sarah

This urge to read was encouraged by my Aunt Sarah, my mother's eldest sister, who, although well into her fifties, could neither read nor write. For as a girl she had had the responsibility thrust upon her of helping to bring up her brothers and sisters.

She was consequently left unmarried and without a formal education. But she adored listening to a good book—and I became her reader. When I came to a long word which baffled me, she would say understandingly: "Never mind, lad! Just say ''Alifax' and get over it!"

Aunt Sarah was a great character and I often recall her tiny, rather sharp face, with its pallor which was eloquent of her life of floor-scrubbing, washing-up and working in the mill. She left the mill for good only in her middle sixties, but I don't think I ever saw her without her thick grey shawl and her clogs, except on Sundays.

She loved to get out for an hour or two into People's Park, where she would have us feeding the ducks, calling to us to throw our lumps of bread well out into the pond.

On the terracing were statues of all the Greek gods, including Venus and Apollo. One statue sat in solitary confinement: the marble image of Frank Crossley, M.P. for Halifax, set within a huge glass dome. It frightened me to death.

Years later, Aunt Sarah was taking my own boy, David, to feed the ducks in People's Park. Right to the end she never lost that mannerism which marks the mill-worker of Lancashire and Yorkshire—the exaggerated movement of the lips in framing words. My mother was like that, too.

One of the most amusing of the family was Aunt Emma, a real Yorkshire lass whose most endearing qualities seemed to have been brought out by adversity. Her husband, Uncle Jim, was a dyer's labourer who spent as much time unemployed as he did on the job.

Although there was so little coming in, Aunt Emma and Uncle Jim had thirteen children and never lost their optimistic outlook. I'm sure Emma would never have got through all her difficulties but for her hearty sense of humour.

One night, when my Uncle Jim arrived home from the funeral of one of his workmates the worse for drink, and murmured thickly: "Tek my boots off," she snapped: "Not if tha kicks me to death i' bed."

She was completely uninhibited and would talk sex with anybody. In those days that was some achievement!

Once, discussing with my brother and me the importance of happy sex life to a married couple, she was reminded that it might not be anything like so vital as she was making it out to be, but she laughed. "Ee, lad, me and thi Uncle Jim fall out about nowt else," she exclaimed. She was then over sixty.

In contrast, another of my mother's sisters, Aunt Janie, married "rather better" and became known to all the family as "t' sister that's well off." Her home was bigger and better-furnished than any other I knew; and the house boasted a possession which underlined our awareness of Janie's more exalted state—a bathroom with a beautiful all-pervading smell of coal-tar soap.

Aunt Polly And Uncle Dick

Then there was Aunt Polly. She suffered from asthma all the time I knew her, and had a thin, rather seedy, appearance. Her husband was a big unintelligent man whose monotonous job as "engine tenter" in the mill where Aunt Sarah worked had left its mark on his personality.

The doctor had frankly told Aunt Polly that she would never live in the Halifax atmosphere; Canada, it was suggested, had the air best suited to improve her condition. Yet the possibility of Aunt Polly and Uncle Dick leaving us all for another continent—another *town* was remote enough—seemed quite unreal until, one morning in 1911, my uncle had words with the boss.

I don't know what it was all about, but the incident closed in the only way possible with Uncle Dick. He wiped his hands on a piece of oily waste, threw it on the ground and said: "Reight—Ah've finished!"

And he had. Within days they had sold up their home to find the fare and came to live with us until they sailed. By now, we had moved to another house, 24 Essex Street, which had what my mother and father had talked about for a long time—a front parlour.

Soon I was conscious of Uncle Dick's appallingly bad manners and I could not resist watching him at mealtimes, though I pretended to look at anybody but him

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PRISON BREAK

by HERBERT DALMAS

ILLUSTRATED BY ZELINSKY

Mother Santley wasn't scared. Escaped killer or no, she knew how to deal with a man with a cold

Covering Alice with his gun, Loster struggled into the dress. "You won't fool anybody," she said

THE SECOND NIGHT of the siege at Summerdale, it snowed. There was barely enough to cover the ground but it came after a day of rising temperature. The police, and the troops who had been called out to help them, had the situation in hand all right. It was only a question of time before the convicts barricaded inside the prison would have to give up.

The people who lived round about were not particularly interested in the desperate men inside. What worried them was the man at large.

Three of the convicts had broken out in a refuse truck during the first few minutes of the riot. A ring had been thrown round the area with amazing speed. Two of the fugitives were caught, wet, cold and dazed by the innocuous-seeming storm. That left Bert Loster, the mild-mannered murderer, who was said to have organized the break, still free—and alone.

It was when he was alone that Bert Loster was most dangerous.

The village of Befford is near the edge of the county and nearly nine miles north of the prison. But, as in most of the other villages round about, nearly all the men had given up their regular work to concentrate on the manhunt.

The afternoon of the third day was warm but at dusk the temperature went down and it began to snow again, a thick, wet snow with enormous clinging flakes.

At ten o'clock there was a knock on the back door of the house where the Santleys lived. Just one knock, and although Alice Santley, like every other woman in Befford, had been warned not to open any door except to a prearranged signal, Alice opened the door. She did it before she thought.

A MAN slithered in through the opening like a cat and he had the door closed before Alice knew what was happening. She looked at the gun in his hand, more in surprise than alarm, then wonderingly at the man holding it.

"All right, Grandma," he said in a husky voice. "Just keep calm. I know you're alone because I've been watching this house and I saw your old man leave."

At fifty-eight, Alice Santley's eyes were as blue as they had been at eighteen. Her hair was white and carefully combed. Her jaw was square and thrust a little forward. When she walked, even around the house, it was at top speed, leaning a little forward as if the rest of her body was trying to keep up with the determination of her chin. Alice Santley had spent her life getting things done without too much help, and the little man with the gun didn't terrify her because terror was a thing she didn't know much about, never having had time for it.

"What do you want?" she asked quietly

"I want to get out of here, Grandma," he said. "You're going to give me clothes and you're going to tell me how to get through that swamp." He jerked his head towards the Befford swamp, the only place in the area not being closely watched, because a man who didn't know it could never find his way through.

"All right," Alice said. She measured him with an expert glance. "My husband's clothes will be too large for you. I wonder you didn't think of that when you saw him go—and try somewhere else."

Bert Loster's thin lips curled in a grin that

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LOVE ME, LOVE MY PYTHON

by RICHARD COLLIER

Snakes either repel or they fascinate—and they fascinate a growing number of people who think nothing of keeping a couple of pythons at home

Brian Smith keeps ten-foot pythons as pets. Dangerous? "Nonsense," says Smith. "A bite may cause pain, but there's no poison in it"

FOURTEEN YEARS AGO, a young employee of the Gas Light and Coke Company named Brian Smith gave up beer and cigarettes and took to snakes. "Luxuries," says Smith, "are things that a herpetologist just can't afford. Why, his time is so taken up with his snakes that he doesn't even miss them."

Smith practises his herpetology, which is the study of reptiles, in his former playroom on the top floor of his mother's house in Fulham, where two ten-foot Indian pythons, turning the scales at 50 lb. apiece, slither and twine in a 10 ft. by 9 ft. glass case.

Until the summer of last year, there was no organization in this country catering for people like Smith; but then Alfred Leutscher, a greying enthusiast from the Natural History Museum, formed the British Herpetological Society.

Crocodile In Greenhouse

"I knew we should fulfill some sort of need," said Leutscher, "but I never realized the need was as big as this. We've got over two hundred members already, and still they're pouring in—applications from all over the world."

Strictly speaking, herpetology embraces every known reptile, from the Italian tree-frog to the golden salamander: one member even keeps a full-sized crocodile in a specially constructed greenhouse. But most of the society members are primarily interested in the ways of the serpent, for diverse and fascinating reasons.

Leutscher, for instance, was bitten by an adder which he had mistaken for a grass snake when he was a schoolboy on holiday in the Isle of Wight. He was on the danger list of a London hospital for a period. Deciding that it was high time he learned the difference, he magnanimously adopted some adders of his own.

"If there's a snake in the room with you," he says, "you may be repelled or you may be fascinated; but at least you'll never get drowsy. Having a snake around keeps you on your toes all the time."

Recently, a man whose pet dachshund died from an adder bite offered 7s. 6d. for every dead adder brought to him. The schoolboys in the district began to work overtime on extermination, an incident which Leutscher gravely deplores.

Speaking of Smith, whom he holds in high regard, he says: "When that chap turns up at our exhibitions and stands there with a python round his neck, he's helping to wipe that kind of attitude out for ever. He's spreading the gospel."

Smith himself does not regard the routine of his normal weekday evening as anything out of the ordinary; though he is aware that a snake-keeper can become too blasé at times. There was, for instance, the snake-keeper's wife who sued her husband (though unsuccessfully) for divorce.

"It was too much to bear," she explained, "seeing him sitting there in an armchair, with a nasty, creepy python coiled round his neck, reading detective stories for excitement."

A snake can hardly see, cannot hear at all, has no eyelids, only one lung, and remains dormant for most of the winter months. But, says Smith: "Although I wouldn't say they are affectionate, they do get to know you. They have a very strong sense of smell. That's one way in which they recognize their food."

Boas and pythons, which are constricting snakes, have to swallow their prey whole; their teeth, shaped like backward-curving thorns, are unable to get a grip on their food and tear it to pieces beforehand. Few constrictors are interested in food more than once a fortnight.

A Year Without Food

"They drink quite a lot," says Smith, "up to half a pint a time; but it wouldn't really matter if I fed them only monthly. I knew of a python that didn't eat anything for fourteen months, and then started up again as if nothing had happened."

A rat, a rabbit, a guinea-pig or any warm-blooded animal will serve equally well as food. But, since the meal must be served either live or freshly killed, the cost of upkeep soars: live rabbits, uncontrolled, may cost anything up to 10s., and a guinea-pig as much as 8s. 6d.

Complications arise with the constrictors' conservatism; once they have become used to one particular form of diet, they will often starve before accepting a substitute. Once a pet cobra, which had been accustomed to taking freshly killed rats, slithered away in apparent terror at the sight of a live rat.

Snakes never see very clearly what it is they are eating. They sense it, partly by smell, partly by their ever-flickering tongues, which serve them in the same way as whiskers do a cat. Because of this, snakes have frequently bitten off more than they can swallow.

A snake-keeper who owned a couple of boa-constrictors, one about eleven feet, the other about nine, threw them each a live pigeon and then retired for the night. Arriving to change their water next morning, he was horrified to see no pigeons and only one snake.

Having disposed of his own pigeon more quickly, the larger boa had presumably made a grab at his friend's dinner and, working his elastic jaws over one half of it, had gone on until he had swallowed not only his friend's dinner but his friend as well.

On another occasion, a python confronted with a live rabbit struck at it, missed, and caught the corner of its blanket instead. It proved unequal to the struggle, and died with the blanket undigested.

Smith hotly denies that presenting a snake with live prey involves a great deal of unnecessary cruelty. The victim's neck, he says, is broken instantly by the force of the snake's striking.

"All this talk of hypnotism is rubbish," he adds. "It isn't the snake's eyes that fascinate the other animal; it's the continual movement of its tongue." Most experts agree with this viewpoint; constricting snakes never attack unless they are hungry or annoyed, and few animals exhibit any fear of them.

Rabbits have been known to sit and wash their faces unconcernedly amid a snake's coils. Once a frog mistook the darting tongue for a fly and made a snap at it.

Painful—Not Deadly

Another theory that Smith dismisses as nonsense is that having a constrictor around the house is likely to prove dangerous. Constrictors have no poison in their fangs and, although their bite might cause pain, there would be nothing lethal to it.

A full-grown python—specimens have been captured up to twenty-five feet in length—packs a hundred pounds of constriction pressure and could, if it felt like it, crush in a man's smaller ribs, though it is doubtful if it could actually kill him. Boas, which are not more than twelve feet when fully grown, are comparatively heavier and weigh anything up to eighty pounds.

Few pet-keepers like to have a rattle-snake or cobra in captivity. The fangs can be temporarily removed but always grow again. Permanent removal of the venom glands entails risk of great damage to the snake's

mouth which is its most vulnerable part.

In one case that Smith knew of, a soldier brought a fangless cobra back from India in his kitbag and, some months later, took it to the zoo to be identified. An hour later, he left for home, sadder, wiser, and minus his snake.

Unknown to him, its fangs were fully grown again, and he had faced certain death at least a dozen times a day. The zoo officials believed that only his complete unconcern in handling it had saved his life.

The distinction between male and female snakes is difficult: the males have long spurs (the remnants of their back feet) near their extremities, while the females have only stumps. Pythons lay eggs (as many as eight dozen a time) and incubate them for eight long weeks, while boas bring forth their young alive.

Not Affectionate

But the snake-keeper's problem, says Smith, is to interest them in reproducing at all. "They don't seem to be a bit affectionate between themselves." Once, while he was away on holiday, the female python did lay, but there was insufficient moisture in the air and the eggs had shrivelled before he returned.

Disease is a problem. Snakes are not only liable to canker of the mouth but to pneumonia and bronchitis as well. In such cases it is often touch-and-go, and there is little the enthusiast can do, beyond painting the snake's throat with witch-hazel twice a day.

Not long ago, a woman approached the zoo for help because Horace, her python, was in an advanced state of pneumonia. The zoo authorities said there was little that could be done.

The woman said that Horace was not only her best pal, he was her bread and butter besides. As a music-hall artist, she had danced "The Death of Cleopatra" with him all over Britain.

Finding no consolation with the experts, she put Horace to bed with hot-water bottles and blankets and, in case any further warmth was needed, she got into bed with him herself. And there, apart from rising to cook meals, she stayed for a fortnight, after which time Horace was found to be quite his old self again.

Owing to import restrictions, pythons are difficult to get today and prices are steep: £2 10s. for a 3-ft. python or boa, between £6 and £8 for a cobra, as much as £30 for a rattlesnake. Consequently, some people are making do with the local varieties. Just outside Camberley, for instance, Lt.-Col. J. S. Wilkins is devoting himself to adders.

Hunger Strike

Adders rarely thrive in close captivity; their resentment takes the form of a hunger strike, and they die off alarmingly fast. Mindful of this, the colonel has set up a 9-ft. square open-air vivarium for them, with brick walls 2 ft. 6 in. high, all built by himself at a cost of less than £5.

Unlike Smith, the colonel is forced to study his adders from a distance; their bite is too dangerous for close contact. Should he be forced to pick them up in an emergency, he takes

Smith feeds his pet with a rabbit. Pythons swallow their prey whole

them by their tails—"they're the only snakes that can't recoil on themselves."

For most people, adders are too difficult to keep. People like Geoffrey Izzard, for instance, who lives in a small house near Surbiton, find grass-snakes (at 8s. 6d. each) easier to cope with.

Izzard, however, claims that keeping a grass-snake is far trickier than keeping a python, and involves many more day-to-day problems. For one thing, the grass-snake's three to four feet of coils require sustaining much more frequently: mice, minnows or frogs every few days. And when it comes to escaping, the grass-snake is a Houdini.

Cleared The Floor

One snake turned up in a night club and cleared most of the patrons off the dance floor in record time. In the end, the wine waiter took it home and kept it as a pet.

Another appeared—they never discovered how—in an Underground train between Uxbridge and Park Royal. It sloughed its skin as it departed and jammed the mechanism of the electric door.

I asked Izzard how long his snakes were and he said he wasn't sure, so we went out into the darkness of the coal shed to check up. Sure enough, the cage was empty and it took an hour's patience, plus the cunning device of an upturned reading lamp, to secure them. Gradually the heat and light proved irresistible and one by one they slithered from beneath the coal.

We carried the female into the living-room and measured her: a perfect specimen, exactly three feet. When I left shortly afterwards and Izzard saw me off, late passers-by had a diverting view of my host waving from the lighted porchway, with three feet of grass-snake coiled on his shoulder, flickering its tongue in vehement farewe[illegible].

PRISON BREAK

Continued from page 10

his eyes did not share. "I saw you," he said. "Your clothes'll fit me."

"Of course," Alice said. "How smart. I would never have thought of that."

"Let's get goin'," Loster muttered. At this point he sneezed.

"You've caught cold," Alice said. "What good will it do you to get away if you catch pneumonia and die?"

"Stop talking. Just give me some warm clothes," he said. "And give 'em to me quick, before I get rough."

"All right," Alice said. "Don't worry." She smiled. "You remind me a great deal of my son."

Loster didn't bother to answer that. He just motioned with his gun.

They went upstairs. Alice got out a dress. Loster started to put it on awkwardly, covering Alice with his gun.

"You'll never fool anybody," Alice told him.

"It'll get me far enough," he said.

"Besides," Alice continued, as if she hadn't heard, "your own clothes are soaking wet. Here. . . ."

She took an old-fashioned folding screen from the corner and stood it up.

"Get behind that," she said, "and take your clothes off. I'll give you a towel to rub yourself down with."

Bert Loster's eyes were puzzled. But he made his decision. "Just keep away from the window," he admonished.

"As long as you're doing it," Alice said, "you may as well do it properly. You can use some of my husband's underclothes and some heavy woollen socks. I've got some heavy shoes that ought to fit you. They'll keep your feet dry."

Loster rubbed himself with the towel. His eyes were still puzzled.

"If you're going to be at all convincing," Alice was saying to herself, busy at a chest of drawers, "you ought to have a corset and some padding."

They went downstairs, Loster in a suit of Dave Santley's heavy underwear, woollen socks and corduroy trousers, rolled up to be out of sight under the dress Alice was carrying over one arm.

"Convict or no convict," she said, "no man's going out of my house on a night like this without proper clothes. And I'm going to give you something for that cold, too. You can drink some coffee while I'm getting it ready."

Loster caught at this. "How do you happen to have coffee ready at this time of night?"

"Dave and some of the others go off duty at eleven," Alice said. "They'll come here."

Loster sipped the coffee suspiciously—then hungrily. It was good.

Alice brought a piece of flannel, made Loster unbutton his shirt so that she could pin it around his chest. It would relieve the congestion, she said.

It was a curious scene because Loster wouldn't let her go behind him and he kept the gun against her head while she pinned the flannel, laced the corset tightly and stuffed padding into it. With the dress and the hat, the disguise was bizarre but plausible.

"The road through the swamp," said Alice as she worked, "is quite wide enough if you know it. It's marked with stumps. I've got a torch you can have. And you'd better take the rest of the coffee along in a vacuum flask."

At the door Loster stopped. "I still don't understand you," he said.

"Well. . . ." Alice smiled. "I've got a boy of my own. Maybe I'm doing this for your mother—wherever she is. Some time you'll remember this and it may help to make you sorry for the bad things you've done."

"Right-o, grandma," Loster grinned. He opened the door, his gun steady on Alice. "I won't forget, and if I happen to run across your old man I'll blow his head off quick—so he won't suffer."

He disappeared. Alice put fresh coffee on the stove, got into her heavy winter coat and went out.

It was still snowing. Near the fire station, where headquarters for the manhunt had been set up, she was overtaken by her son, Dick Santley.

"Mother!" he said. "What are you doing out here?"

"Your man's in the swamp."

Dick Santley knew his mother too well to doubt her. In a few minutes ten men were hurrying towards the swamp. Alice said mildly, "I doubt if you'll need your guns." But, of course, they didn't pay any attention to that. However, when they started to deploy to encircle the swamp she said, "You won't have any trouble finding him. I think we'll hear him call in a moment."

Just then there was a bellow from the centre of the swamp—and it was repeated, a rising sound like the scream of a wounded animal.

The men ran forward. Alice followed. And when they saw Bert Loster they knew that Alice had been right. They wouldn't need their guns. The killer was on his back in the middle of the stump-bordered path, a strange, unearthly figure in Alice's dress, thrashing in the snow, and clawing insanely at his chest.

"You'd better cut him out of that corset and that woollen vest while there's still something left of him," Alice said as they dragged him to his feet. "I made him a little mustard plaster for his cold and laced him a bit tight—I put about two pounds of mustard in it."

"Frankly, gentlemen, things couldn't be much worse . . ."

Poland keeps Europe guessing

by NORMAN PHILLIPS

She wars with the Vatican, yet rebuilds churches; spurns the Marshall Plan, yet helps it work; hates her secret police—and has a policewoman as pin-up

THE LAST STOP in Poland made by the Warsaw section of the Orient Express is Zebrzydowice. There is a wooden station there, a customs shed, a guard room and a buffet where tea costs sixpence a glass.

And there I was. The blue sleeping cars of the Continent's crack train were heading westward. A few minutes before, I had been aboard, sound asleep, on my way to Paris. The green capped frontier guards had roused me and ordered me off the train. My papers were not in order, they said, and I could not leave Poland.

It had been almost impossible for me to get a visa into Poland in the first place. Now I couldn't get out.

Yet between these two encounters with the Polish State security forces, I was given every opportunity to go anywhere in Poland, to speak to anyone or to visit any factory or institution I cared to suggest.

That is Poland today: a country of paradoxes which can be explained only in terms of a fierce pride and a burning hatred. Yet running through this romantic mixture is a strong strain of shrewd realism.

These contrasts crop up so often that every aspect of Polish life has to be examined as to whether it is the rule or the exception.

The Showpiece

Poland is the showpiece of the Eastern "People's Democracies," but today it is more Western in its outlook and atmosphere than any other country lined up with Russia. Poland's Communist-controlled Government has spurned the Marshall Plan as imperialistic," yet Polish coal is feeding the factories and forges of Western Europe.

The bulk of Polish industry has been nationalised, yet private enterprise is encouraged to start new businesses subject to a restriction of the number of employees to fifty per shift or 150 men per plant.

The Polish Government is in full conflict with the Vatican and at the same time is financing the rebuilding of Roman Catholic churches. Even stranger, the Russian-equipped Polish Army marches on church parade each Sunday.

Culture is organized on the Soviet pattern but the examples would horrify Moscow critics. Polish contemporary art is reminiscent of France and has a big sale in New York. It is doubtful whether it would be considered suitable for Leningrad or Moscow.

The last word in Polish contrariness, I found in Warsaw's main street, the Marszalkowska. Here, in the capital of what is known as a police state, the most popular person turns out to be a police officer.

Her name is Lodzia and she is Warsaw's only traffic officer. She stands there directing the flow of vehicles and levying fines on the spot. The chinstrap of her forage cap rests on a pretty chin and her brunette curls peak out at the back. Her picture is in the paper as often as any movie star's and when Lodzia goes on vacation they run a special interview so that her public will know where she is.

At one end of economic spiral: Mrs. Dzyk and daughters of Strugiennica village. Farming conditions have changed as little as their costumes

Like the Irish, the Poles are proud and they are contrary. They have an enormous capacity for hate. Hatred of Germany inspired the Poles who fought in the Battle of Britain and who conquered Monte Cassino. The same force sparks the rebuilding of the nation today. It is the one basis on which all Poles are united and the Government uses it as a spur.

"Why keep the fires of hatred burning? Where will this policy lead?" I asked General Wiktor Grosz, spokesman for the Polish Government.

"The might of Germany was built on Polish bones," was his reply. "It is too early for love or friendship with Germany."

General Grosz is a Communist. He is very frank about this in a disarming way as if he wants to assure you that he has no bombs up his sleeve. Officially retired from the army after service which included the storming of Berlin, the general wears dark blue business suits and fancies a red and blue check tie with a blue check shirt.

"Go anywhere you like. Talk to anyone you like. Come back and ask me any question," he invited me. That is the Grosz formula—a far more Western approach than I found in any other Eastern European country. And it is one that reaps goodwill.

Like all Communists in Poland, General Grosz knows they have been able to lead the country into the Russian camp because of the German problem. And they are frank to admit they have been helped by the U.S. and British foreign policy.

The particular issue which has done most to drive Poland into Russia's arms is the German-Polish frontier. At Potsdam the Poles received 39,000 square miles of German territory in exchange for 69,000 square miles of Eastern Poland ceded to Russia.

Big Three Blamed

Is there anger or bitterness at the loss of territory to Russia? There is a sentimental feeling for Lvov and some of the country east of the so-called Curzon Line but responsibility for this is charged to the United States, Britain and Russia. The decision was a joint one.

Against this is the fact that the former German provinces are richer in resources. The Germans want this territory back. Some British and American statesmen have encouraged their hopes. The Russians have said they will stand by Poland.

"Ninety-eight per cent of the people are behind us on this issue," General Grosz declares.

"We don't ask the people to love the Russians," another Polish Communist told me. "We just point out the alternative between Germany and Russia."

The traditional dislike of Russia is played down by internal censorship of anti-Russian criticism. On the other hand, Russia is well propagandized in the Polish Press with reprints from *Pravda*, and every effort is made to foster admiration for the Russian system. Stalin's guarantee of Poland's frontiers is broadcast every time the Western German leaders demand the return of Silesia and Pomerania.

The Poles call these 39,000 square miles their western territories. Here is the best example of how the anti-German feeling speeds the tempo of Polish life. Above Breslau, now renamed Wroclaw, flies a banner: "We are here. We are building."

New Aristocrats

Even the best informed diplomats in Warsaw agree the Poles are making better use of the land and its resources than did the Germans.

The miners are the new aristocracy and they get priority in everything. The 77,500,000 tons of coal they will dig this year will go to twenty-one European countries. It pays for the goods which spell recovery for Poland and explains why the Poles scorn Marshall Aid but at the same time trade with the West.

The prewar miner had little

Nursery School at Szczecin (Stettin). Children are among five million Poles moved from East to replace Germans expelled from Western land

economic security and next to nothing in the way of schools, welfare or medical services. Today there are clinics in the mines, mother and child centres and a school system from crêche to university.

"We have never had these things before," miner after miner told me. "Now we own the mines, we have all these improvements. If my children are clever they can go to the university."

I asked my driver to stop outside a block of workers' flats at Katowice, the heart of the coal region. It was a grimy brick building on the outside, such as you find in any mining centre. Inside, I knocked on one of the doors and found myself the guest of the Zelosko family.

The father had been killed in a mine accident. His widow received a pension but the real head of the family seemed to be nineteen-year-old Eva, who worked as an electrician.

The flat was small—two bedrooms and a dining-room-kitchen. Eva showed me her pay packet.

The rent for one month was 160 zlotys. At the official rate of exchange this is two shillings.

Don't Care About "Isms"

The Zeloskos do not understand much about Communism. They do understand that their rent is fixed by a Communist-led government and that it amounts to less than seven per cent of their family income of 23,000 zlotys a month.

In contrast to the twentieth-century industry which Poland is building, her agriculture is, to a great extent, still back in the eighteenth century.

The only thing in common between the Zelosko family flat and the cottage where the Dzyk family lives in the village of Strugiennica is the collection of religious paintings and crucifixes. The Dzyks live as small farmers have lived for hundreds of years.

It was on a Sunday afternoon that I visited the Dzyks. The girls were wearing their handsomely embroidered blouses and their traditional skirts with stripes of blue, green and orange. Some of the men wore trousers in the same pattern.

When I stepped into the faded blue wooden cottage it was like stepping back into another century.

Farming methods, the Poles say, must be mechanized. But this means larger farms. The respect in which the Communists hold the farmers' conservative views is shown by the plan which calls for only one per cent of the farms to be made into large-scale co-operatives each year. They are careful to stress *co-operatives* and insist that the new farms will not be collectives.

Agriculture must be modernized in order to free more men for the factories. This ends up in an economic spiral: the factories must first turn out more goods so that the farms may be mechanized to free more men. . . .

New workers are needed for the western territories where the Germans have been ruthlessly expelled and 5,000,000 Poles installed. Stettin, now known as Szczecin, is one centre which will require more people for its expanding port, steel mills and fertilizer factories.

Szczecin was forty-five per cent destroyed by the R.A.F., yet it will be handling before long more than its pre-war tonnages. As a town planner, Mayor Zaremba of Szczecin is grateful for the work done by R.A.F. bombers.

In two raids they wiped out the city's slums. The area will be turned into parks. The surplus of brick and rubble is being shipped to Warsaw.

Warsaw sets the pace for the nation. Warsaw was bombed, then shelled, fought over and dynamited before being put to the flames. Not all the cameras in the world, nor all the typewriters, could picture the devastation.

The Warsaw ghetto is the ultimate in destruction. It is so complete that it is almost incomprehensible, for not one wall or chimney stands to give a single clue as to what buildings existed here.

The reconstruction is all the more spectacular against this background. Warsaw is now fifteen per cent rebuilt and new buildings seem to spring up overnight.

If the Poles had started on an open field to build a new city, the energy that has so far been spent on Warsaw would have made them a model town for 200,000 people.

April Fool Hoax

Life could not be called gay in Warsaw but there is enthusiasm and drive. On April Fool's Day, Warsaw radio put out an announcement that Winston Churchill was flying to Poland, a refugee from an England invaded by Americans.

A later bulletin announced that Mr. Churchill was coming to establish a Free British Government in Free Poland. Listeners were invited to meet him at the airport.

The hoax was so successful that both the wireless and airport telephone exchanges were jammed all day.

This kind of fun brightens a work day that starts at 8 a.m. and which, for many like Helena and Seymour Srykuv, does not end until dark.

The Srykuvs are among the chief architects of the new Warsaw and it was 9 p.m. when they received me in their studio on Chocimska Street.

"We could use 5,000 architects," Mr. Srykuv declares. "We have only 1,200, so each of us works four times as hard."

The work of planning the new Warsaw started in underground ateliers during the Nazi occupation. The Srykuvs even worked on their plans while they were prisoners in concentration camps.

One of the architects of the future is a boy named Raymond who works for the national broadcasting system. He has an office job which keeps him busy from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. Then he starts to study architecture for the rest of the day.

The Amazing Christine

Of all the young people whom I met, the most amazing was Christine. On top of her office work as a translator, she is studying medicine. Her ambition is to be a gynaecologist.

Raymond and Christine, like thousands of others, are working like mad. Their aim is to make up the gaps in their education caused by the war—and, constantly reminded by their government, they know who started the war.

The Communist leaders must realize they are in a minority in a country which is mainly Roman Catholic. The Communists are getting support from devout Catholics and the reason for this is that the Communist policy in Poland is thoroughly Polish.

The first two postwar years in Poland were marked by violent opposition. Ambushes, shootings and sabotage were frequent until January, 1947, when the Government declared an amnesty. As a result, the majority of the armed opposition turned in their weapons.

Today there is still an underground, but as long as Poland's economic situation continues to improve it has little hope of causing trouble for the Government.

The underground, I learned on my return to England, still has enough organization to maintain a "railway" system which spirits its people out of Poland and into England, near Hull. But within Poland there are no signs of its operations.

Real Test To Come

It is possible for a foreigner to visit a country which is living under a "terror" and yet to remain unaware of that condition. I could find no evidence of violent opposition, not even chalked or painted slogans. Western diplomats in Warsaw told me the police pressure existed but that it was applied with finesse.

When it has to meet the combined opposition of the small farmer and the Roman Catholic Church, the new régime in Poland will meet its real test of strength.

In their anxiety to rebuild their country and in fear and hatred of Germany, the Polish people have accepted Communist leadership. Poland today is what is known as a police state but it would be a mistake to dismiss her as a colony of the Kremlin.

That, perhaps, is the greatest paradox of all. Despite the presence of a secret police, the UB, the Poles radiate enthusiasm and not fear.

The achievement of the Polish Communists is not that they have imposed a made-in-Moscow pattern on Poland. Rather that they have harnessed the national spirit with all its energy, pride and hatred. It is this force which commands the respect of every visitor to Poland and is the key to the Polish paradox.

THE HUMAN MACHINE

Only the Best

I OFTEN think we shall go down to history as "The Shoddy Age." It's not altogether our fault—two world wars have helped. All the same, we can't escape a large part of the responsibility.

People usually get what they want, if they want it badly enough. We don't seem to want anything that isn't utilitarian and second-rate.

There was a time when beautiful and artistic things were desired and loved for their own sake. Now, craftsmanship of this kind is dying because we no longer value its skill.

The remedy is in our hands. Let us realize there is a cultural side to life as well as a practical one. Let us spurn the shoddy and take only the best.

by ROFFE THOMPSON

Hammond (bending) and Lawrence fix tent in meadow where they slept the night, while eager young helpers hold horses. **Horses made them many friends**

Horseback holiday

by JOHN MAY

For the young men it was a novel way of seeing England on less than 35s. For the horses, it was a honeymoon

A MAN ON A HORSE is almost a super being. With his eye-level eight feet above the ground, he can see farther than any normal human. He can travel across rough country at exhilarating speed. He inspires pedestrians with awe, and even motorists sometimes show respect.

Best of all, Gilbert and Peter found that your horse automatically makes you the friend of every countryman.

Peter rode his big bay horse, Gilbert his strawberry roan mare. They set off with a rattle of hooves through the streets of Chelmsford, busy with shoppers, just before ten o'clock on the Saturday morning.

Seven days later, on the Friday night, they clattered home through the dusk. They'd had a rich week of riding and camping. It cost them precisely thirty-four shillings and sixpence each.

Thirteen-mile Ride

Peter Lawrence, nineteen, is an apprentice instrument maker. Gilbert Hammond, twenty-four, is in radar development. Both work at Marconi's.

Apart from the fact that his father was in the cavalry in 1914, there were no horses in Peter's life until he had the chance of mounting a pony belonging to a workmate. It took him for a thirteen-mile ride against his will, and he had to walk back.

Then, at sixteen, he gave up cigarettes and cinema-going, and started saving. At the Cambridge hunter sales in November, 1947, he bought his six-year-old Irish gelding, Monty, for sixty guineas. Monty had a white star on his forehead, two white socks at the back, and stood sixteen and a half hands (five feet six inches tall at the shoulder).

Monty lives in a small meadow between houses in a Chelmsford by-road, with a pony for companion. The grazing costs Peter five shillings a week. Shoes come to another three shillings; Monty goes to the blacksmith about every six weeks, and a set costs eighteen shillings.

Peter brings his horse a daily sack of hay from his home, two miles away, on the back of his bike. It comes from a stack of about a ton which he cut along the roadside with a scythe.

As a sideline to a greengrocery business, Gilbert's father has bought and sold horses since his son was six. As a kid, Gilbert rode them bareback. Demobbed from the Navy two years ago, he started giving riding lessons.

Then he bought his colourful Irish mare, Susan (sixteen hands). He keeps her in his father's stable in the middle of Chelmsford; lessons pay for her shoes and feed.

20-lb. Kits

When Marconi's shut down for the summer holiday, the two riders borrowed a lightweight ridge tent, rolled up a couple of blankets and a groundsheet cape each, and set off with their packs (weighing just over twenty pounds apiece) across the pommels of their saddles.

They followed bridle paths and avoided roads. Impulse took them from the Roding villages of Essex, through Epping and the forest to Waltham Abbey, along the river to Broxbourne, and on to Hertford.

From Welwyn and Watton-at-Stone they pushed on through Royston to Saffron Walden. They visited the famous church at Thaxted, and then made for Sudbury, in Suffolk. They averaged thirty miles a day.

The first night was the only time they were asked to pay for grazing: a shilling each. They pitched their tent in a meadow, a stackyard, and twice in grass chicken runs.

A farmer's wife gave them her complete cheese ration and half-a-pound of butter, which they ate with chunks of new bread. They were just going to sleep in the barn on a stack of pea haulms when the sixteen-year-old daughter of the house brought them a steaming jug of tea, with an invitation to breakfast next day.

On Tuesday evening they slept in a butcher's stables on straw.

As usual, the horses received a generous feed. They were bedded down separately, but kicked up such a fuss that they had to be turned into a loose box together. "The holiday became a kind of honeymoon for them!"

Next morning they put on clean socks, hung out to dry on the stable door overnight. Sometimes they washed and shaved in cattle troughs, other times in their drinking mugs. There was usually an audience: cows, pigs, flocks of goslings or chickens.

Cantering along the grass verge beside a Hertfordshire road, Susan put her foot into a pothole and went crashing down. Gilbert staggered up with a dislocated shoulder.

A doctor gave him a ticket to be X-rayed at Saffron Walden. It meant a journey of thirty-five miles.

Forcing the pace to get there next day, they started to gallop along a twelve-mile bridleway. Gilbert took his arm out of the sling and reached tenderly for the reins—and his shoulder clicked back.

Snoozed Standing Up

Peter's Monty (the bay) and Gilbert's Susan (the roan mare) had learnt a lot of road sense on their week's ride; they snoozed standing up when their riders dismounted, and seized any chance of taking a drink. But they trotted home as fresh as when they started out. They had covered 230 miles in seven days.

The fee for a riding lesson today is normally a minimum of ten shillings. A horse may cost from thirty shillings a week to feed, without overheads of stables and staff. Cheap rides on tired nags are often not worth the few shillings saved, and teach practically nothing—unless it is bad habits.

The correct costume for riding — breeches or jhodpurs, boots, hacking jacket—should include a hard hat. It's a protection; "they've all got to fall off some time."

I can testify from experience that a riding bowler makes a reliable crash helmet. But spills are no more frequent than with a bicycle, and the sheer physical joy of riding a good horse is a pleasure no other means of travel can touch.

A BRILLIANT AND UNUSUAL

Judas forgiven

ILLUSTRATED BY GILBERT WILKINSON

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1948 a well-scrubbed, threadbare, frayed rag of a woman called on the welfare officer in a town not far from Birmingham, and laid information against an old gentleman who was living in her house. She was a widow, she said, and augmented her little pension by letting furnished rooms.

She was not a landlady, she insisted; she "obliged." She had come to tell the authorities about a certain Mr. Embody who, she said, needed looking after.

Still writing, the officer said: "Is the man without means of support?"

"Oh no, I wouldn't go so far as to say that, sir. He must have a little something, but. . . ."

"Profession?"

"To tell you the honest truth, sir, to the best of my knowledge and belief, he doesn't do anything. If you want my honest opinion, he's got some sort of a private income."

"Doesn't pay his rent?"

"Regular as clockwork."

"But incapable of looking after himself, is that it?"

"Goodness knows I do my best, sir, but . . . well, if anything was to happen to Mr. Embody . . . you know what people are, sir, what would people say?"

"Try and be a little more explicit," said the officer, not looking at her. "He has means, you say, this Mr. Embody of yours. He pays his rent. Then what do you want me to do about him? You must try and make yourself clear, you know?"

"Well, Mr. Embody's been with me for nine years, you see. I live in Beadle Circus, where the war memorial is—I daresay you know it—you know, where all those pigeons are. I must say I'd be sorry to lose Mr. Embody, because a nicer, cleaner old gentleman never lived in my house, but it's for his own good, you see, and if (God forbid) anything should happen, well, being a widow, you see, I've got my living to get and I don't want any death in my house. And the poor old gentleman . . . well, all I can say is, God forbid."

"Look here, will you state the facts of the case or——"

"Well, he keeps the window open day and night, in this raw weather, too."

"Most reasonable people sleep with their windows open, ma'am. Well? What else?"

"Well, goodness knows that Mr. Embody's got little enough to live on after he pays rent, which he does on the dot, not that I charge him much—he pays twelve shillings but I could get sixteen—well then he spends practically every penny left over on birdseed. Birdseed and bread. You see?"

"I can't say I do. Bread, yes. Birdseed. What for?"

"He puts it in little heaps on the window sill, you see, with little bits of torn-up bread, and just sits, rain or shine, looking out of the window. He never eats. If you want my honest opinion, he's a hunger-striker."

"And what does he do when he's not looking out of the window?"

"Well, he stuffs his pockets with little bits of bread, and birdseed, maize, and all that stuff, and stands about the war memorial in the square making kissing noises, and if you don't mind my saying so, trying to feed the birds.

"Then he comes back and sits by the open window going *phweet-phweet-phweet* till it gets dark, and then he goes to sleep with the window wide open, even if it's pouring with rain, and doesn't care if he wakes up drenched to the skin.

"And as soon as he gets up, down he sits again with his *phweet-phweet-phweet*, calling the birds—not that they ever come—and I don't mind telling you that I'm not sorry they don't, because up to the time Mr. Embody came to the house those blasted pigeons were a nuisance round the house with their (excuse me) droppings and their billings and their cooings.

"However, I must say he pays his rent regular and behaves like a perfect gentleman. But he's weak, you know, and he's not a young man, and I don't want trouble in the house. So——"

". . . I'll look into the case. Good-morning."

Next day the welfare officer went to see Mr. Embody. The landlady, winking and nodding, led him with mysterious gestures to the top of the house, opened a blistered brown door, and showed him to a tiny half-naked bed-sitting room. A north-east wind was spitting out a spatter of bitter cold rain, but Mr. Embody was sitting, curiously intent, at the wide-open window.

HE was a little grey man, wrapped in a stale old blue dressing-gown; sickly shivering, weary to the bone. His jaws were fringed with a sort of fluff.

"What do you want?" he said.

The welfare officer said: "I have come here to ask if I can be of any assistance to you, Mr. Embody."

"Thank you very much, but I don't need your help or anybody else's. Good day to you."

"But my dear sir, I can't see you sitting like that, undressed, at an open window on a day like this. You'll catch your death of cold. At least let me close the window for you."

"Please go away," said Mr. Embody, bending over a slice of bread. He tore it into little pieces which he arranged carefully on the window sill.

The welfare officer could see that this empty-looking, skinny, eaten-up little man was exhausted and ill. He said:

"Mr. Embody, you're not well, not well at all. Here, let me at least dry your forehead." And he took a handkerchief out of his breast pocket, but the old man waved him away, saying:

"My forehead is my forehead, sir, and my business is my business. Who invited you here? Go away."

"This intrusion, Mr. Embody, may seem unwarrantable. Believe me, I respect your privacy. But I was advised to come and see you because, in fact . . . it was suggested that you were at present temporarily incapable of looking after yourself. You know, you are not well. Won't you please let me shut that window?"

With extraordinary vehemence the old man said: "Aha! That beast of a woman has been carrying tales, has she? Damn her, I'd never have set foot in her filthy house if it wasn't for the sake of the birds. May the Devil take her, she has her rent, she's paid—what more does she want? I pay my rent. I keep my window open. I offer the birds a little food. What the devil, you confounded bureaucrat; do you want to lock me up for that?"

The welfare officer took off his overcoat and hung it over Mr. Embody's shoulders saying: "I am a servant of the Government, you know, and it isn't my duty to poke my nose into your private life; but as man to man I tell you, upon

STORY by GERALD KERSH

my word of honour, I want only to help you. Upon my soul I do."

Then he leapt forward just in time to catch Mr. Embody, who was falling off his chair.

The old man weighed less than a hundred pounds, and so the welfare officer lifted him without effort, carried him to the bed, and covered him with the blankets and his overcoat. Then he called the landlady and ordered her to find a doctor.

In a strange dreary monotone Mr. Embody said: "You will forgive my somewhat unceremonious treatment of you, but the fact is, I was engrossed . . . engrossed. I am dying, as you must know, therefore . . . I was, to put it simply, engrossed. I am not well. Therefore, I hope, you will make allowances and pardon me. *You* at least will pardon me," he said wistfully.

"Oh my dear Mr. Embody, come now, come! You are not well, as you say; but . . ."

". . . Dying, dying and damned, dying and damned."

The welfare officer did not know what to say; he could only utter a sort of murmer of protest.

The old man went on: "I am Judas Iscariot. I kissed and betrayed. I am the Unforgiven. I am the Damned. . . . There was a Saint-somebody-or-other who said that Judas, by God's mercy, is allowed once a year to come out of the fires of Hell and cool himself on the great ice floes . . . just for one day. Is it true, do you think? I don't think so. Imagine —out of a pit of boiling sulphur and into an icebox . . . oh, the agony of that, eh? Oh, ineluctable torments! . . . And then again, was it Dante who locked traitors in the Last Circle of ice? . . .Oh, the cold, the cold, the everlasting cold—oh how I fear the cold of the outer dark! . . . God, God, how many times must I say that I am truly sorry?"

"You are a little feverish, Mr. Embody, and you must rest."

"How can I rest until I am forgiven?"

"For what?" said the welfare officer, humouring him.

"Treachery, treason, base betrayal! Forgive me, forgive me, for the love of God forgive me!" cried the old man, sitting up and thrusting his trembling hands towards the open window. "Didn't I tell you that I was sorry?"

THEN in his feverish monotone Mr. Embody went on:

"". . . Only the humble can learn . . . only the ignorant are taught . . . excuse me, what am I saying? They used to call me The Bird Man. Do you remember? Is it still done? In St. James's Park, in Trafalgar Square, everywhere . . . they feed the birds. Do they still feed the birds? I don't know. I forget.

"Do you remember those ridiculous creatures whom the birds love—old men, old women, children?—have you seen them?

"They spend their money on peanuts and things, and stand in Trafalgar Square waiting, simply waiting, with their hands full of peanuts; then the pigeons come down and eat out of their hands.

"Or sometimes they go into St. James's Park and feed the ducks . . . I must confess I never liked ducks very much: they are gluttonous creatures . . . although much has been said against pigeons. I love pigeons and doves. They used to call me The Bird Man because in Trafalgar Square or anywhere else where pigeons congregated, I was a figure. The birds loved me.

"I believe, on my honour, that they loved me for myself alone, and not for the little bits of bread with which I used to fill my pockets. They came to me before going to anyone else. They covered me from my shoulders to my knees, even if I had nothing to offer them. The pigeons were responsive to my slightest gesture: and to every intonation of my voice."

Having said this, old Mr. Embody tried to sit up—he could not—and whistled, whereupon a young pigeon that had been fluttering about the window flapped its grey wings and flew away to the war memorial.

"Aie, aie, aie! You see? The Damned, the Unforgiven. Me! Yet there was a time when they called me The Bird Man. Now let me tell you something. Confession is good for the soul. And I am a dead man."

"I admit that you are not well, Mr. Embody . . . allow me to tuck this blanket in, but . . ."

". . . Once upon a time I had a sister. There was a time when we were, if not exactly rich, at least well-to-do. There were bad days. My father, who rests, I believe, in peace, innocently speculated. He lost almost everything, of course, and left only seven thousand pounds for my sister and me, which I . . . I was young and very foolish . . . put into rubber. You know, no doubt, what happened to rubber in 1923—192 . . . whatever it was."

"If I remember rightly," said the welfare officer, quickly, "rubber fell with a great big crash over one weekend."

". . . There was little enough left, as you may imagine: about a pound a week for each of us. Meanwhile my sister had married a ne'er-do-well, a thoroughly wicked man who had believed that she was wealthy—as indeed she was at the time of their marriage—who ran away from her and left her almost penniless, with a small child."

"It does happen," said the welfare officer, looking at his watch and hoping that the doctor would come soon. "Yes, it happens, it happens."

". . . You know, I am economically valueless," said the old man, with febrile brightness, trying to sit up.

"I have never done anything. Do you know what I've done all my life? I have fed birds.

"If I am repeating myself, please forgive me; but I think I mentioned before that they called me The Bird Man. Trafalgar Square, you know. . . . Millions and

"I looked across the square. The pigeons that had flown away from me were eating out of the little girl's hands"

millions of pigeons . . . also economically valueless, I believe.

"But if one loves them, what can one do? Some men fall in love with fatal women, *femmes fatales*, you understand; others with dogs, cats, birds . . . I do not like cats myself, but it takes—what is the expression?—ah yes, all sorts to make a world, I believe. I was an idler, nothing but an idler. I spent most of my time in Trafalgar Square—a most extraordinary place, my dear sir, most remarkable. There, pigeons from all over London congregate.

"They strut, they pout, they cadge monkey-nuts and bits of bread from passers-by. They loved me. Do you think that they loved me because my pockets were always full? It has been said, you know, but it isn't true. It isn't, upon my immortal soul, it's *not*! I have been there with empty pockets, and still the pigeons left the people with their hands full of monkey-nuts to come and sit on my shoulders. When there was no more room on my shoulders they would perch wherever they could—on my head, my hips, my hands—anywhere, so long as they were near me.

"THAT's why everyone calls me The Bird Man. And it was not only pigeons. Even the sparrows loved me; and sparrows do not readily love. Anyone will tell you that the old Bird Man has been photographed covered with sparrows from head to foot—and they with nothing to gain by it, either! I had only to whistle and then you would have seen a sight. From the top of the Nelson Column, from Northumberland Avenue, Pall Mall, Charing Cross Hospital, Haymarket, there would come a flight of birds with a great whirring of wings ready to smother me. I had become quite poor, you know."

"Oh dear, I'm sorry to hear that."

"Dear yes! Quite poor I assure you. I had, altogether, about thirty shillings a week, you see."

"It isn't much, is it?"

"Oh, for myself it would have been quite enough. But as it happened, my poor sister was in need of money. I believe, between you and me, that her wretched husband had made her draw her capital and, to put it bluntly, gambled it away or otherwise squandered it. I need scarcely tell you that this is between you and me . . . what was I saying?"

"Your sister. . . ."

". . . Ah yes, thank you. Yes indeed, he left her, that unmitigated bounder, he left her completely penniless a few weeks before she had her child. He was a cad, you know; and Ella was always what you might call a sensitive kind of girl, and far from robust. . . . Pitiful, pitiful! Gave her all I had, which wasn't much; went hungry, in fact, between ourselves; had to raise a little more. Nothing to sell, no work to do—unfit to do it if there was—nothing left to pawn—desperate, sir, quite desperate."

"That was most unfortunate. Do let me cover your shoulders."

"What would you have done?" asked Mr. Embody, in agony. "Tell me what you'd have done if you had been in my position."

"I don't know, I'm sure. But please don't kick the covers off. Do keep still, please now."

". . . I turned traitor," said the old man.

"Not really?"

"Really and truly. There came a day . . . oh, that dreadful day! I was miserable, weak and tired. Perhaps you know despair? I hope not. To despair . . . that is a mortal sin, a terrible sin. . . . Saint John of the Cross speaks of the Dark Night of the Soul: I know it, my soul knows that dark night.

"I did not know what to do. I had not a crust of bread with which to feed my birds, but I went to the Square and they came to me notwithstanding.

"I said to them: 'My poor little birds, I have nothing to give you, forgive me, but perhaps times will change and then I will make up for it all. In the meantime, kiss me. . . .' And when I said that the pigeons rubbed their heads against my chin. And then and there—it was on a Thursday morning—a little thick fellow whose face I cannot recall, came up to me and said: 'Excuse me, but would you be interested in making a few pounds?'

"I was quite shabbily dressed, you understand. Ten years before, believe me, such a person would not have dared to address me . . . let alone with such a . . . he would not have dared. But then I said that I would be interested in a few pounds, and asked him how and where and why. And when he told me my blood ran cold."

"It ran cold?"

". . . cold? No, excuse me, I am very hot. . . . I was cold a moment ago but now . . . oh yes! He said: 'They call you The Bird Man around here, I believe.' I said that I had that honour, and he said: 'You like birds, I take it?'

"Naturally, I told him that I did like birds, and he went on to say: 'Birds, well, they're all right in moderation. They're all right in the country, for instance. But in London, well, you know how it is: they live on the fat of the land, people feed 'em, and they breed and and breed and breed, and they get to be a nuisance. They mess up buildings, and windows and all that; they get in the way of traffic . . . you know. Well, so every now and again we have to thin 'em out.

"'The trouble is, of course, catching 'em. I'm employed by the L.C.C.—my name's Cole. Now it struck me this way: a man like you could help us clean up these pigeons in less than no time at all. A man like you could whistle 'em into a net, and Bob's your uncle. We'd make it worth your while. What say?' . . .

"Oh dear me! Poor me! Poor birds, poor man, poor world! Put yourself in my position. You are an understanding man—don't tell me that you are not an understanding man, sir. Say, for example, that you love birds, and love your sister. Which would you sacrifice? If it must be one or the other, which goes? The birds go. This is so because it must be so. Would you kill your sister to feed a bird, or a bird to feed your sister? Look into your heart and ask yourself this question."

"A chicken, for example, is a bird," said the welfare officer, "one does not kill birds for fun, yet one revives an invalid with chicken broth. There can be no question about that. And as you say, it would be most improper to feed a hungry pigeon on roast man, but perfectly permissible to feed hungry man on roast pigeon. You make too much of this, Mr. Embody."

"OH no, excuse me," said the old man, "people do kill birds for fun, you know. When I was a very young man I did so myself—with a shotgun. . . . Oh, it was iniquitous! We went out on the moors—it was in Yorkshire—to shoot grouse. If I may say so, I was a very fine shot. I brought down three brace with six shots.

"My seventh shot broke the next bird's wing. Will you believe me when I tell you that I picked it up and killed it by knocking its head against the toe of my boot? That was when I stopped hunting and gave my guns away. . . . There was one drop of blood, exactly like a ruby, a pigeon's-blood ruby, at the tip of its beak; and that disgusted me. 'No more,' I said. Everyone was surprised. I had been such a fine shot. I was sorry.

"I tried to make amends. The birds understand—mark my words, sir, they understand. They forgave me. You know, no doubt, that the more you forgive, the more you love. They loved me. And I sold them. I sold them for three pounds fifteen shillings. Did I tell you that my unhappy sister was in need of money, and that I had none? . . .

"I whistled my pigeons into the trap. Then I ran through the streets with the money in my hands. When I got there Ella was dead; and there was I with three pounds fifteen shillings. Meaning no harm, I believe, Mr. Cole had paid me in half-crowns. When I counted the money I saw that I had thirty pieces of silver. It was then that I began to feel cold, and did not know what to do. What would you have done?"

"Mr. Embody, if you want my honest opinion, I think you're exaggerating the significance of this incident."

"I spent ten shillings on cake. There were still hundreds and hundreds of pigeons in Trafalgar Square. I went to feed them. 'Forgive me,' I said, offering them cake; but when I held out my full hands and whistled, they flew away. I believe that I cried then; I must have cried, because a little girl said: 'You're crying—what's the matter?' I filled her hands with cake crumbs and said 'Feed the pigeons, little girl.' On the eastern edge of the square I turned to look. The pigeons that had flown away from me were eating out of her hands.

"SO I went to St. James's Park and there even the ducks avoided me. Then I went to my room, broke up the rest of my cakes, and put the pieces on the window-ledge. It was cold. You know how, when the weather is bad, the seagulls come in up the river? You do, of course. They are hungry birds, the gulls, bless their hearts—they'll eat anything, and catch it in the air, too. Even they avoided me.

"They would come sliding down the air towards the smell of the food, and then weave and flap away, leaving it untouched; and in their shrill cries I could hear, *Judas Iscariot, Judas Iscariot, Judas Iscariot!* And the very sparrows on the roof next door (they never came to my roof) chirped, *thirty pieces of silver, thirty pieces of silver!*

"So you see, I have been trying to tell them that I am truly sorry, those birds. And that is why—eccentric though it may appear—I offer them my last few bits of bread, don't you see . . . but they won't touch it . . . they don't trust me. They *know*. What is a man to do?"

The welfare officer said: "I think you'd be well advised to put this matter out of your mind, Mr. Embody," and he looked anxiously towards the door, hoping to hear the footsteps of the doctor. ". . . What are you doing? Don't! Please, you must lie down and keep warm. . . ."

Glowing with fever, Mr. Embody was dragging himself towards the open window. "Listen, listen," he whispered.

Listening, the welfare officer heard a distant chirping of multitudinous birds, curiously melodious. The old man's face broke into joyous wrinkles as he puckered his mouth and made his kissing noise. He took a piece of bread from the window-ledge, put it between his lips, and waited.

"No really. . . ." said the welfare officer. But then, from out of a pot-bellied cloud, came a great white pigeon. It fell like a falling star until it reached the open window, where it hovered, extending its strong grey beak. Very delicately, it took the bread from between Mr. Embody's lips, and disappeared with one powerful stroke of its bright white wings.

The welfare officer heard the opening and closing of the street door, and the rumble of a man's voice in the hall. But before he could exhale the tail-end of his sigh of relief, Mr. Embody, with a beautiful smile, said:

"Thank you. You believe that I am truly sorry, then? I am forgiven?"

Half a minute later, when the doctor came in, the welfare officer said: "I'm afraid you are just too late, doctor."

NOW YOU KNOW

A COUPLE LOOKING for a furnished flat no longer face the bugbear of a high premium.

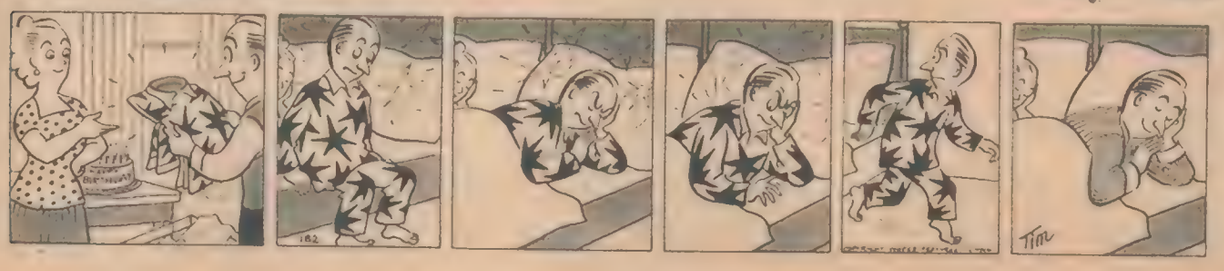
The Landlord and Tenant (Rent Control) Act, 1949, makes it illegal for a landlord to charge a premium as a condition of tenancy. Though he can still demand that the tenant buys furniture or fittings, their price must be reasonable. If it is considered exorbitant, the tenant can appeal against it.

The landlord is normally responsible for repairs in furnished premises but any breakages or damage beyond reasonable wear and tear must be made good by the tenant.

WRITE TO JOHN BULL ABOUT IT: Readers with personal problems can enlist the help of John Bull's team of experts. Inquiries (other than medical) should be sent to the John Bull Free Advice Service, 189 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Please enclose a stamped and addressed envelope for reply.

OH, JOHNNY!

by TIM



I LOST MY MEMORY

by LISA STEWART

Who was I? Where was I? My past was a complete blank. Then the truth drug began to work, and it all came back . . .

I WASN'T SURE IF I was dreaming. A clock somewhere outside chimed six, and the early morning light began to creep into the room. . . .

The walls were distempered in pale blue, and backing on to them on two sides were two neat rows of beds. Girls dressed in mauve and white striped dresses were moving briskly up and down carrying bowls of water. Strange women were sitting up in the beds and one of them was singing "It's a lovely day tomorrow" as she wiped her arms with a flannel.

At first nobody took any notice of me, and I lay staring at the strange, rough nightdress I was wearing and at the neat diamond pattern of the white counterpane.

I felt utterly exhausted and too bewildered to speak. But, inside, my mind was fighting to answer the recurring sequence of questions: Where am I? How did I get here? And *who* am I?

"What's up with you dearie?" The voice startled me into full consciousness. A strange, plump woman was sitting up in the bed next to me, busily combing her hair.

Was She A Relative?

I concentrated hard on that woman—perhaps she was a friend? A relation? I didn't know. I tried hard to think but all I found myself able to mumble was: "I don't know—I can't remember. Who are you, anyway?"

The plump woman looked interested. "I'm Mrs. Parker—Mrs. P. they all call me. Been here nearly a month and the ulcer's much quieter now, thank goodness."

"The ulcer?" The plump woman leant forward confidentially: "Take it from me. This is the best hospital in London for treating duodenals. Isn't that right, Auntie?"

"Auntie," a pathetic-looking old woman in the bed the other side of me, smiled. "If you say so, Mrs. P. All I know is I wish I could get my leg out of plaster. Three months it is since I fell, but my bones are that brittle."

They carried on a conversation over my head for some minutes until at last Mrs. P. returned to the attack: "Came in during the night, didn't you? I didn't hear a thing."

Suddenly I could stand the strangeness no longer. I drew the sheet as far as it would go over my head and lay there crying.

It must have been some minutes before I heard a man's voice saying: "We're going to give you a little injection to help you remember. You haven't got any objection, have you?"

"I felt a tiny pin-prick. I grew drowsy. Now my mind started groping." Pentathol injection makes patient's mind receptive to doctor's questions

Cautiously I pulled the sheet from over my head. Mrs. P. and Auntie were not to be seen. Green curtains had been pulled round my bed and a kind looking man in a white coat was sitting on the bed beside me.

Just behind me was a pretty, dark-haired girl I had noticed before. They were strangers, too, but they seemed friendly. "No, I don't object," I murmured.

I felt a tiny pin-prick in my arm and gradually my body began to feel drowsy, relaxed. But my mind was groping now in the way I have sometimes found myself desperately jerking awake from a nightmare.

Who was this man? Suddenly I knew. "You're a doctor. Why am I here? What happened?"

Like A Dream

His voice was distinct, but it seemed to come from a great distance, like the voice in a dream. "Everything's all right," he soothed me. "We're going to help you. Now relax.

"Shut your eyes—and try to think hard. Did you catch a train? Do you remember the station? Try hard to remember the name of that station."

It seems incredible now, that for two days I could have wandered without attracting attention and yet a stranger to myself. Amnesia was something I, like most ordinary people, had associated with unlikely Hollywood films or clever psychological novels.

As I lay listening to the doctor's insistent questions, my mind cleared—gradually. There was no sudden "click," but, piece by piece, he helped me to reconstruct those days of oblivion.

Several times during the questioning my mind became confused again, but the Voice persisted: "Come now, you've told me you remember your home town in Devon, your daughter Jean and your husband Paul. What's the surname on those ration books you say you take to the grocer's every Monday?"

That Monday

I told him, almost without realizing it, and as I did so that Monday morning when I had left home came back in all its vividness.

The doctor had said, I suddenly remembered: "We are going to help you remember who you are—and something else — something you wanted to forget very badly." And sure enough, I found myself telling him all about it.

My first husband had been killed at Dunkirk, leaving me with my seven-year-old daughter, Jean. It was hazardous going until I met Paul. He proved a wonderful husband and stepfather.

Last year Jean started to train as a receptionist at a large hotel near our home. Soon afterwards, people

there began to miss things. One day my husband was summoned by the manager for "private discussion."

He had come home, very worried, to tell me they had reason to suspect Jean. I couldn't understand or believe it.

But, on the Sunday night before I lost my memory, I discovered the truth. I found jewellery and money hidden in Jean's room.

I didn't sleep that night, but turned over and over in my mind what I knew I should do—tell my husband and report Jean to the police. And I knew I couldn't bring myself to do either.

I remember getting breakfast that Monday morning—and seeing them both off to work. What happened afterwards I could relate to the doctor only as events—what I was thinking at the time I still don't remember.

I took the week's housekeeping money and caught a train to London. I felt quite hungry by the time I reached Paddington and had a meal of fish and chips in a little, dirty restaurant nearby. For the rest of the day I can recollect only that I wandered about aimlessly, and that I spent the night at a lodging house off the Edgware Road.

They didn't ask me to sign my name, but maybe I looked dishevelled, for the landlady said: "Bed and breakfast 8s. 6d.—and we like our lodgers to pay in advance."

That night I slept well, but I awoke to what seemed a dream world. I must have walked miles of streets, for all the shops were shut, and it was early evening before I stopped again.

Three Shillings Left

I remember discovering that I had only three shillings left and that I was hungry. Fish and chips again—at a milk bar.

It was after I paid the bill that I became really distressed. I wandered about again until it was almost dark. I felt utterly bewildered.

Suddenly a policeman towered above me: "Come on ma'am, haven't you got a home? Can't have ladies sitting on the steps of Madame Tussaud's all night!"

It was the policeman who had brought me to the hospital—after I had burst into tears and told him I didn't know where I lived — didn't even know who I was. "We'll soon put that right," he had said.

A nurse had been sitting by the doctor all the time I was talking. She spoke for the first time, using my name: "I think Mrs. Stewart could have some breakfast now, don't you doctor?"

I felt suddenly ashamed of all the trouble I had caused, and said so. "You haven't given *me* much trouble," he answered. "I simply gave you an injection of pentathol—the truth drug—and you told me all about yourself.

"If you hadn't, we should have had to keep you while the police made inquiries. Now there's no need for that—but we've got to make sure you don't keep having memory lapses.

"When you get home I want you to have regular treatment from a psychiatrist, and to get in touch with your local psychiatric social worker as well. Don't worry—you'll be all right."

That was six months ago. And I won't pretend, as I lay in that hospital ward with the world disturbingly in focus again, that I felt any gratitude towards my benefactors.

The first feeling of relief came when I got back to Devon (I did thank the nurse for seeing me off and the almoner for giving me my fare)—and there on the platform was my husband. He hid his own two days of stress and said: "Now don't you go worrying like that. Everything's going to get put right."

It was. Together we went, two days later, to the psychiatric department of our own hospital. The social worker talked things over . . . made us both see it wouldn't be in Jean's interest to shield her. They've been very good to her—she's been put on probation for a year and the probation officer has found her another job.

Until a month ago I paid a fortnightly visit to the hospital psychiatrist. In a nutshell, his treatment was to convince me what a futile way out of my problem I had chosen.

I may have thought myself exceptional: but to the psychiatrist I was true to type: "another case of hysterical amnesia resorted to, as usual, in the intense years between twenty and forty."

Escape From Reality

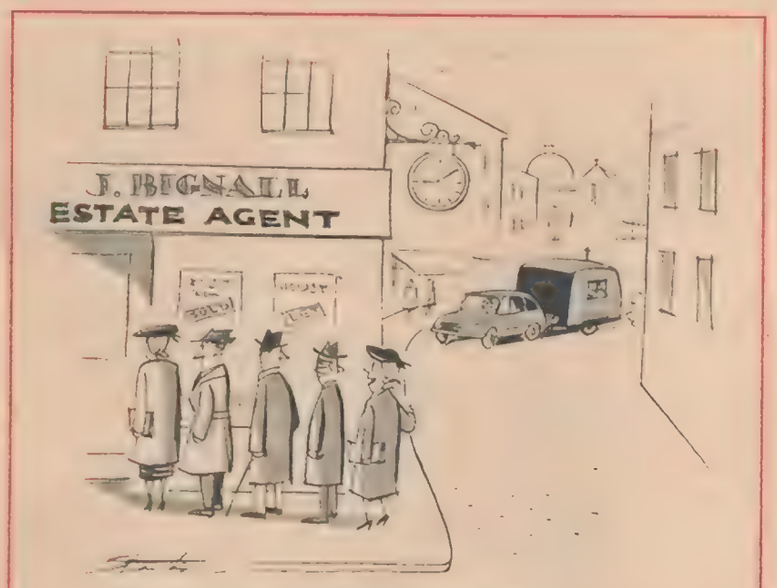
Every year scores of ordinary people fall victim to this kind of memory lapse, it seems. It is an entirely subconscious escape from reality and it is only in retrospect—and with treatment—that I and fellow sufferers can be prevented from doing it again.

Reasons why people seek this escape today are innumerable: the unpaid rent, income tax, another child coming and no room to put him in, an unhappy love affair, shock after childbirth. . . . They say women succumb more than men and that only children are immune, because they are too young to realize there *is* such an escape.

It is the general hospitals, not asylums, which bear the brunt of lost memory cases. If I had not reacted so readily to the truth drug, or had I been a more serious case, I might have been sent along to a rehabilitation centre or neurosis unit for a few weeks, where the aim of the treatment would be just the same: to make me unafraid to face problems.

The whereabouts of these special hospitals are not publicised and they are called by ordinary hospital names. I visited one of them to see the work for myself.

The atmosphere was free and easy; patients were not strictly disciplined—and most of them went home for the weekend. During the week they were encouraged to work or take up some hobby.



"Here comes Mr. Bignall now"

All were people, like myself, who had let their everyday problems get on top of them—and although they hadn't all taken the same way out as I did, I felt a kindred sympathy. There were only two cases like my own: both had been brought in after days of wandering.

During that time they had been doing as I did—eating, drinking and behaving as if fully conscious. Their money ran out like mine—and they were found, exhausted, by a policeman.

One of them was a young student doctor who had signed on with a not-too-particular skipper, as crew. He had spent four months as a galley boy and was discovered only when his small ship's savings had been spent, wandering in a Scottish town.

Under the truth drug—which has helped hundreds of people to find their memory since it was first used twenty years ago—his was a story of wife trouble and exams. But, because his memory lapse wasn't nipped in the bud quickly, like mine, and because he had no happy background to return to, he needed the peaceful atmosphere of that hospital for a bit.

I can guess how he felt: it is bewildering enough to have forgotten who you are for two days—it must be really frightening to try to reconstruct a blank four months.

It is not only psychiatry which has made the recovery of memory possible. To the neurologist go the second type, what my doctor calls "organic" cases, caused through head injuries, fevers, poisoning (including alcohol) or epilepsy.

They, too, stand an excellent chance of quick recovery. Their treatment is rest and sedatives for anything from hours to a month, and, if their minds are still blank when they recover consciousness, the truth drug may help.

But, unlike me, they will never be able to remember or reconstruct the "black out" period. That is the reason, of course, why they are never allowed to give evidence in accident cases.

Amnesia today is still a sizable problem. Spread over the country the average is one genuine case in every large hospital. Doctors are naturally determined to spot the fake who will gladly waste their time.

Test For Fakes

From the moment I set foot in hospital, it seems, I was taken stock of. There are secret methods of spotting the phoney which, if revealed, would give the criminal an excellent chance to escape punishment. But some fall for more obvious baits.

I heard of a casualty sister who quickly suspected a new arrival listed as "lost memory." Before waiting for the doctor to arrive, she took matters into her own hands. She found an old discarded suit and took it to his ward.

"There's no need for you to stay here, Higginbottom. Here's your suit."

"That," exclaimed the amnesia case indignantly, "is not my suit—and my name's not Higginbottom."

But when hospitals were overcrowded during the war, hundreds of cases on record tell how the Absent Without Leave soldier found amnesia a convenient excuse. Cases of long memory lapses which today would be nipped in the bud were common.

Case Of Joachim

Notable among them was that of Joachim Charles, a "British airman" who was cared for in a Belgian hospital for four years. Scores of hopeful wives of missing airmen wrote asking for his photograph. At least one saved up the fare to visit him.

The truth drug didn't help, for Joachim Charles had no intention of being helped. A moment of boastfulness was his undoing. It was found he had been born in Toulouse and sent to Hamburg by the Germans as an agricultural labourer.

An English flying suit picked up one day in a field—and a flair for the language—suggested the idea. As an English airman he escaped across the frontier into liberated Belgium and began his "amnesia."

Such things could not happen in peacetime. Doctors now believe that a genuine memory lapse of any kind should respond to treatment within—at the most—two months.

M.P. in a Cloth Cap started it all

by HERBERT HODGE

BACK from his spell in hospital, Herbert Hodge recalls a Labour pioneer, reports on a new book about how the Party grew, and discusses present trends. Hodge will shortly be starting a new series of commentaries in John Bull

LIKE A GOOD MANY other people, I've often wished I could step into a time-machine, and travel back in history to see some of my favourite historical events.

To see one favourite, I shouldn't have to travel very far. I'd only want to be set down outside the entrance to the House of Commons for a few minutes on a day in 1892.

Before I started, I suppose I should have to disguise myself in a top-hat and frock-coat, so as to mingle unnoticed with the other people there—because, of course, in those days, a top-hat and frock-coat were considered the only possible wear for any self-respecting male person around the House of Commons.

As I stood on the edge of the pavement, balancing my top-hat and trying to look as if I belonged to it, I think I should hear the sound of trumpets—or, rather, the sound of one trumpeter, trumpeting for all he was worth. Then up would clatter a pair-horse brake—the Victorian equivalent of our motor coach—with the trumpeter sitting on the box beside the driver; and a crowd of chaps in the seats behind, in the very obvious dress of Victorian working men on their day out.

Turning Point In History

With a final flourish on the trumpet, the brake would pull up beside me; and I should see a quiet-looking man in a tweed jacket and cap get down and walk into the House of Commons—the one cap standing out conspicuously in the entering stream of top-hats.

That would be all. I should come away well satisfied—feeling I'd seen one of the turning points in British history.

The man in the cap, of course, was the Scottish miner, Keir Hardie, come to take his seat as the first independent Labour member for West Ham South. It's one of the odd quirks of history that although Keir Hardie had already started a Scottish Labour Party, he had to come to England in order to get elected as a Labour member. The party we know today was founded eight years later, in 1900.

I've just been reading about it all again in Francis Williams's new book,* which tells the story of the Labour Party from its foundation in 1900 to the present time.

What shocked many Victorians about Hardie's entry into Parliament was not so much his politics as his cap. The dreadful story of Hardie's cap pushed most of the other news off the main pages of the newspapers, and sent a wave of horror through the country. But I'm glad he stuck to it. In those days, it meant something. It was the symbol of what he stood for—the interests of the mass of ordinary people, as distinguished from the interests of the privileged few.

The trouble, nowadays, with trying to express the ideas that Hardie stood for, is that it's all apt to sound like a worn-out political slogan. The party propaganda machines have thumped away at the old phrases until they have almost lost their meaning; so that the believer, in each new generation, has to search for new words of his own. Besides, many of the things Labour supporters used to say and do when their party was in opposition have become completely out of date now that Labour is in power. And there, I feel, lies the Labour Party's greatest weakness. Too many of its supporters still fail to grasp this fact.

Just as many a Christian is too busy denouncing the ungodly to do anything positive for Christianity, so many a Socialist is still too busy carrying on his ancient feud with the "ruling class" to do anything positive for Socialism. It's time he realized that if there is a "ruling class" in this country today, it is as representative of his own class as of any other class, and that every time he tries to sabotage it, he is sabotaging himself.

Promise And Performance

Still, that's a difficult thing for a chap to realize when he's still working under the same individual bosses and living in much the same conditions as he was before the Labour Party came to power. The usefulness of a book like this one by Francis Williams is that it enables us to see clearly how the Labour movement started in this country; what its aims were, and how near we've got to achieving those aims today.

The oddest thing about the Labour Party, to my mind, is the combination of motives and ideas that were in the minds of the men who founded it, and the way that combination has held together ever since, yet still remains divided into its three separate, and sometimes opposing, parts.

Right from the start, you could group the party membership roughly into three types. There was the trade unionist type, concerned chiefly with wages and hours, and hardly interested at all in Socialism. There was the Fabian "intellectual" type, concerned chiefly with working out plans and economic theories, and the detailed administration of the future "Welfare State." And, thirdly, there was the Christian (or humanitarian) Socialist, who had very little interest in economics or the Marxist conception of the class war, but who felt that in trying to improve the lot of the downtrodden and oppressed he was living up to his religious beliefs.

This last type, of course, is what the Marxists call a "sentimental" Socialist—as distinct from the "genuine" or "scientific" sort.

Building Up The Party

It has often seemed to me that some of the finest men and women in the Labour Party have been sentimental Socialists—though I may be prejudiced about that because, the older I grow, the more clearly I see that I'm a sentimental Socialist myself.

Anyway, reading Francis Williams's book, we can see how each group has helped in building up the party. And sometimes in nearly wrecking it—when one group or another has tried to run the whole show.

The trade unions, in the first place, supplied the basic cash and the mass-support that made the party organization possible; but, from the Socialist point of view, the narrowness and conservatism of many a trade union leader has often held the party back.

The Fabian type of intellectual supplied the bookish education and the analytical brain that worked out the plans and devised the tactics—but he failed, as a rule, to attract the average man and woman, because of his seeming coldness and lack of human feeling.

The third group—the Christian or "sentimental" Socialists—supplied the inspiration and the driving power. They put the heart into the movement, turning what might have been just a fight for another halfpenny an hour, or a class struggle for political leadership, into a crusade for a better way of living. They, too, had the defects of their qualities. They were dreamers rather than doers. Whenever they were foolish enough to take on a practical administrative job, they were apt to make a mess of it.

All through the fifty years of the Labour Party's history, these three main types stand out; and I think you can make the same rough division among the leaders of today.

The amazing thing to me has been the way the party has held together and continued to grow stronger—in spite of all the internal bickerings between the different groups, the breakings away (*and* the comings back), the bitter political and industrial defeats, the continuous and often vicious misrepresentation in so much of the opposition Press, and the all too human mistakes of the Labour leaders themselves.

Marxian materialists would say, I suppose, that the Labour Party's success is due solely to the pressure of events—because modern methods of industrial production are steadily driving us toward the collectivist State, whether we like it or not.

But I believe there's far more to it than that. I believe the reason the Labour Party has gained so many supporters in this country (as distinct from a Communist or Fascist party, both committed to a collectivist State) is because so many of its Socialist pioneers were inspired by Christian, liberal and democratic ideals, rather than by materialistic or "class-war" motives. And those ideals have become the inspiration of the whole movement.

Life, for most of us, would be nothing without an ideal to live and work for.

During the past fifty years, more and more of us, finding the older religious organizations no longer able to give us what we needed, have turned toward the Socialist movement because it seems to offer us the best practical expression of the Christian ideal. We vote Labour, because the Labour Party, with all its obvious human faults and failings, is the only powerful political group that seems to be striving towards that better way of life.

Quite Beyond The Pale!

Of course, that's merely my own opinion. There's still a large body of opinion that sees the political problem much more simply. It was best expressed, I think, by a woman I met only the other day. She informed me that while the Conservative and Liberal parties were groups of accomplished ladies and gentlemen, the Labour Party was "only a collection of ignorant louts." So how could you expect them to be able to govern properly?

It's astonishing what a lot of apparently grown-up people still think along those lines. Would it be any good offering them this new book by Francis Williams?

---

*"*Fifty Years' March.*" To be published on October 11 by Odhams Press Ltd. Price 7s. 6d. at all booksellers.*

Night without stars

Idiot! I told myself. Too head over heels in love to spot a trap that advertised itself a mile off.

Obviously, Bénat had decided I'd lived long enough

by WINSTON GRAHAM

WHEN YOU'VE GOT a week to try to make a girl love you, you'll find yourself, most likely, starting the bitterest rows with her. That's the way it was with Alix and me.

It wasn't just the ordinary sort of he-she affair. I had to get Alix away from the Riviera and the unhealthy company of her brilliant, cynical brother, Charles Bénat.

The story started a year before, when, half blind, I'd gone to Nice for a holiday. I'd met Alix and fallen in love with her. I wasn't the only one. Pierre Grognard, a wealthy restaurateur, was her official fiancé.

Alix had taken me to a café she called the Café Gambetta. It was owned by her mother-in-law (Alix was the young widow of a partisan, killed by the Germans). I'd got to know and like the family.

But with Pierre pressing her to marry him, Alix decided not to see me again. From then on, everything went haywire.

One day, she telephoned me. She was at Grognard's flat, and in trouble. I went there, found the flat smashed up, but empty — except for Grognard, murdered.

At the "Café Gambetta," everyone pretended not to know me. "The blind man has made a mistake. . . ." And I learned that there was no "Café Gambetta," never had been.

Advised by a friend to see Charles Bénat, a lawyer, I'd had another shock. Grognard was alive, Bénat said. He'd seen him since the "incident."

Baffled, depressed, I'd gone home, had the eye operation I'd been scared to think of before, and the hundred-to-one chance had come off: the operation was successful. I could see.

Returning to Nice, I learned that Grognard had been "killed in a motoring accident." I knew better. I went to see Charles Bénat, realizing that he'd been putting me off the trail, and that he must somehow be involved. He was involved all right.

The "Café Gambetta" was a black market organization, directed by him. And the Grognard incident? That was a little more complicated.

It went back to Alix's partisan husband. He had been captured because someone had "squealed." Suspecting Grognard, Alix had played up to him to try and extract information. But at the last moment, he realized what she was after and tried to murder her. She had telephoned me, but Bénat, her brother had got there first and killed him.

He told me the whole story one night, on condition that I returned to England and left Alix alone. That, I said, was up to Alix. I wanted to see her for a week. If, at the end of that time, she didn't want me, I would go.

But I meant to see that didn't happen.

PART IX

Alix Tells Her Story

IT TOOK Alix to the little restaurant we'd visited several times last year, an ill-lit place in one of the narrow streets of the old town. There was a *bistro* downstairs, and you stumbled past the telephone up some uncarpeted wooden steps to a low, black-beamed room with a lot of ornamental brasses on the walls and fine linen on the tables and an old grey-haired waiter who'd lost an arm at Verdun. He served everything with one arm, and I'd never known him drop a thing.

As usual at this time we had the place to ourselves. Alix had changed into the cream linen frock with the wide skirt and the scarlet brooch.

I said: "I like that a lot."

She smiled but didn't speak. The smile wasn't nearly so detached as it had once been.

I said: "You look young and innocent and very charming in it."

"Whereas, in fact, I am none of those things."

"Oh, yes, you are. Didn't you know? Young, obviously. And, in a queer way, very innocent, though it doesn't please you to think so."

"It would please me perhaps if it was true. But it isn't true."

I said: "The odd thing is that you think of me as a sentimentalist, a dreamer, a romantic, the one who sees life through a rosy haze. Whereas, in fact, you and Charles are the true romantics. The only trouble is that your romanticism has got pushed off its rockers and has turned upside down. Cynicism is only romanticism the other way up, don't you think? The cynic doesn't see life as it really is: he sees it through a rosy haze that's turned yellow on him. No one can be a cynic unless he's been a romantic first."

She laughed. "I like to listen to your arguments. I don't believe in them, but they're nice to listen to. Go on."

I watched her teeth. "No, you go on. You tell me what you think."

SHE was quiet for a bit, the laughter slowly dying from her face, the warmth going out.

She said slowly: "I wonder—if I tell you the little else there is to tell of what happened on that night—I wonder if you'll see it as something small and not important; or whether you'll see it as something big. You're detached. I'm too close—or I was too close. It seemed to take the roots out of my life. The doctors told me it was silly to feel the way I did. I wouldn't have told them but Charles told them. They sympathized, they said, but it wasn't right to feel like that. It was always happening in this life. Disillusion, you know. The romanticism that has gone wrong; isn't that what you called it? Anyway, I'm having no more to do with it. A burnt child dreads the fire. I'm holding out no more hostages to fortune."

The old man took away the remains of the langouste, brought fresh warm plates, polished them on a napkin, put them before us. Then he came back with the veal in a silver dish, apportioned it between us, scooped out savoury-smelling gravy and added mushrooms and tiny chopped carrots.

When he had gone she said: "To tell you while I'm eating shows how far I've recovered. Twelve months ago I hardly ate at all. How silly. I can tell it you quite simply. That night when Pierre saw how I really felt towards him he wanted to hurt me any way he could. When he saw that taunting me about you had no effect he began about Jacques. . . . He'd been Jacques's closest friend. I told you that. You know how I loved Jacques; the memory of the six weeks of married life with him was something nobody could touch. They'd hanged him but they could never destroy him for me. And then Pierre did so. . . .

"At first I didn't believe a word he said, thought he was inventing it. It came like a knife in my back. I couldn't think, couldn't understand. But he began to give details, details no one but Jacques and I could ever have known. He said Jacques had been persistently unfaithful all through these six weeks. You know, I told you, he was away off and on during those weeks on sabotage work. Pierre said Jacques had been with one woman after another, in Nice, in Juan, even in Villefranche. Like a dog, going with any bitch. . . . Pierre said he'd heard Jacques talking filth about me with two women in a café, making them scream with laughter, telling them about me and my inexperience, what I'd said to him and what he'd replied, how I adored him, and why. And more—much more. . . ."

ALIX abruptly put her knife and fork down and lowered her head. The tips of her fingers were on the tablecloth.

I said: "For God's sake." I got up and went round the table. "Listen, darling, please. . . ."

She looked up and smiled briefly with eyes gone very dark. "Paternal again? I'm all right."

I wasn't feeling that way, but I sat down, afraid of making any gesture she might think was claiming too much. I said: "You were quite right. It's better buried. Let it lie."

She pushed her hair back with her fingers. "Perhaps you can guess how I felt when I began to believe what he said. While I was there with Pierre the worst didn't come. Just then I still carried on like someone who makes the motions of ordinary life without feeling anything. My brains went on, pretending to him, trying to save myself, scheming to call you instead of Mme Colloni at my own apartment, determined that whatever happened to me Pierre shouldn't escape. It wasn't till afterwards, until I came round after he'd tried to strangle me—even later than that: it wasn't really till the next day that the worst happened. There was a sort of great blackness here."

She touched her middle. "It was as if something had gone, and there was an empty desert. I didn't care if I lived or died. In fact, I wanted to die, just to be rid of the bitterness and the pain."

I didn't say anything. She went on: "After a bit, after some weeks it began to change. The need to die was gone, but there was never any more need to feel anything again. Not only was it bitter, it was cheap. All life was cheap and useless: empty puppets, all worthless, jigging on strings. It didn't matter whether Pierre was dead or alive. I'd gone to all that trouble to find out who had betrayed Jacques; but in the end it didn't matter, there was nothing to punish, nothing to betray. The others who'd gone; they were like Jacques; no doubt of it; there wasn't anything left to believe in any more."

The waiter came in and said: "Is there something not to your liking, 'sieu—m'dam? The veal perhaps?"

When we'd reassured him and he'd gone we made a pretence of getting on with the meal.

She said wearily: "It was about Jacques that he gave himself away. He was so anxious to destroy that he lost his caution. He said he'd seen Jacques in Hyères with a certain woman. As it happened, though I didn't know what Jacques did with his time, I always knew where he was because one of my jobs was to bring him instructions. And I know he hadn't been anything like as far away as Hyères—not from our marriage until the tenth or eleventh of May. He went there then, but that was twelve days after Pierre was 'arrested.'"

I said: "I'm very sorry—and ashamed of my insistence."

"No. Perhaps you'd a right to know. And perhaps your theories are right. I was born expecting too much. Well, now—I expect nothing. That's all over."

There was a longish silence.

I said: "D'you think you'll be content to live for ever in a vacuum?"

". . . Not a vacuum. But one can get along with other things."

"Such as living well, dressing extravagantly, gambling as the mood takes you, and helping in occasional black market enterprises."

"Yes, if you like."

I shook my head. "It won't do."

"What?"

"Plenty of people can get along like that but not you. It won't do, Alix. You've too much warmth in your soul. You're deluding yourself now just as badly as when you thought Jacques a saint. Instead of overrating him you're underrating yourself."

"Oh, no, I'm not."

"Oh, yes, you are, my darling. May I call you that?"

"No."

"Well, it doesn't alter anything. You can't change yourself *inside* to order. The person you're doing your best to be—in self-defence—couldn't ever have gone through what you've gone through. She'd have shrugged her shoulders . . . carried on living just the same."

RATHER gently, she said: "But, Giles, don't you see, its *because* I went through such a time that I'm determined never to go through it again. I'm not waiting about to be trampled on any more. I'm not going to depend upon another person for my happiness."

I smiled back at her. "You're making certain of not being let down."

"Yes."

"There's no one now who can let you down except yourself."

"That's it."

"But *aren't* you rather letting yourself down by thinking as you do?"

"I don't think so."

"God knows, I've no right to preach. But it looks to me to be a question of courage."

She coloured slightly. "*I* think it

ILLUSTRATED BY K. J. PETTS

Too late to clutch at the broken parapet of the road, I grabbed wildly at the grass. I nearly succeeded in checking myself, then—horrifying space

needs courage to live to yourself alone."

"Or funk dressed up as courage. Real courage, surely, is in doing something about it, not in running away."

"Like the goat butting against the wall. He won't learn."

I said: "What a big advance we've made since last Saturday."

"Have we?"

"We sit and argue like friends instead of playing ricochets in the water."

She smiled again. "All right," she said. "I admit that."

After dinner we walked up towards Mont Boron, as we'd done once before. It was a beautiful night; not yet quite dark in the west but the short twilight was going. The profile of the land was blurred against the steely haze of the sea and the sky.

I'd suggested Mont Boron. It was calculated perhaps, but there was simply no other way. We might get one more meeting and at that, after a break and seeing Charles again, her defences might have gone up double height. At present she was curiously soft—as if the telling of her trouble had got rid of some of the hurt inside her.

We got out on the path where we'd been that other night, and watched the lights of Nice winking and brightening below and all over the distant wooded hillside.

I said: "Tonight you haven't to tell a blind man what you can see."

"No. . . ." She stopped and looked over the wall. "Have I ever told you how glad I am about that?"

"Last year," I said, "we were both off balance because of the war. Now I'm all right—or as near as makes no matter. You're not. I wish to God I could help."

"Don't think of me as someone who's injured," she said. "I don't feel it. I feel fine—except when it all bubbles up again as it has done now. But otherwise I enjoy myself — *enormously*. Why shouldn't I be fine? I've everything I want. When you go home don't think of me as a poor stunted creature shut off from the Kingdom of Heaven, or something of the sort. Think of me dancing and singing outside the Gates."

I said: "I shall think of you among the Dryads. May I make a last request, too?"

"Of course."

"When I go home don't think of me as sitting *inside* the Gates of Heaven reading a lecture to the poor souls shut out."

She laughed. It was her old laugh really back this time. "I know you're not like that."

"Perhaps I've come near sounding as if I believed it. That's your fault for rousing a contentious spirit."

We went on a bit farther and then I said: "Stop here."

"Why."

"This was where we stopped before."

"So it was. I don't know how you can tell."

"Well, I can. But there's no music; last time, I remember, we had music."

"Yes. I remember. A rumba."

"And an Italian tenor singing about being in prison and not able to escape."

"You said something—no, I said something about my mind being hilly and you quoted. . . ."

"'The vigorous mind has mountains to climb and valleys to repose in.'"

"That's it."

"You were pleased about it."

"Why?"

"Because someone else thought the way you did, I suppose."

"Was it Hazlitt or—or. . . ."

"Emerson? I never looked it up."

She said after a minute: "And the frogs were croaking."

TOGETHER we listened. The frogs were there but farther away than before. I said: "It was somewhere about here that the thing was settled so far as I was concerned."

She looked at me, and couldn't refrain from saying: "Was it? Why?"

"Don't know. I think it followed the close-up, didn't it?"

She moved her head slightly, the light catching her eyes. "Yes. . . . That was a little obvious. I'm sorry."

"It was the first time," I said, "that I really got any idea. . . . D'you remember I put my fingers on your face like this. . . ."

She shrank back against the wall. "Oh, no. There's no need tonight. You can see perfectly well."

"And then somehow the rest followed."

She said: "Look, Giles, this is a very nice walk and I like you; but I don't want to go that way again."

I said: "Was it an unpleasant way?"

She shrugged slightly. "That is not in our bargain."

I leaned back against the wall. "Being strictly rational and unsentimental—what's your objection?"

". . . That I don't want—any of that."

"No thought of me?"

"Should I have?"

"No, of course not."

"Besides . . . if you feel as you say you do. . . ."

I said: "It's all over and done with as far as you're concerned. That's admitted. So there's no risk to you in it. Nor have you any fidelity to anyone, as you had last year. The thing's a passing pleasure—or a passing event at least—with no afterthoughts. Isn't it your way of thinking that we should take the sensations as they come—make what there is to be made of them—then shrug and pass on?"

After a minute she turned from the wall. "I'm not scared of your kisses, Giles, if that's what you're. . . . You can kiss me if you want to—if it's going to do . . . any good. You've been very persistent—and kind. But don't think you've *talked* me into it. Your reasoning

Continued on next page

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NIGHT WITHOUT STARS

Continued from previous page

isn't really very good this time. It's in—rather poor taste."

I drew her a little out of the light of the lamp and looked at her. She looked beyond me.

I said: "Yes, it's in very poor taste and I'm ashamed of it. I'm damned ashamed of half the things I've said to you these last few days—*and* my persistence *and* what you call my kindness. But I'm not ashamed of loving you and never will be. Look at me, you devil!"

She looked at me. "Alix!" I said in a whisper. "Wake up! Alix! Can you hear me?"

She smiled slightly. "I think it's you that's afraid."

"Yes," I said, close to her. "We're both afraid, if it comes to that. I need courage just as much as you. It's not the courage to do what I'm doing now—that's surface stuff. It's the courage to *know*. And only you can give it me. No one else—*anywhere*. . . ." I kissed her.

After about half a minute she tried to get her mouth away, but it didn't work. Then she didn't resist any more.

I just couldn't believe it. There were footsteps somewhere near and I let her go. But somehow at the last minute my hand touched hers and I grasped it. She let it stay. I couldn't believe that, either. The bones in her hand seemed small, childish. I heard her breathing beside me. Something had swelled in my throat, was thumping there.

She leaned against me. She was trembling, and I wasn't much better.

I said in English: "Darling Alix. Darling Alix."

Her hand tightened on mine for a second. She said: "Oh, God. I'm lost again. Don't let me go."

Later, back at the Studebaker, she put her hand on mine. "I'll phone you tomorrow as soon as I've seen Charles."

"You promise—whatever you feel like in the morning?"

"I promise, Giles."

So I let her go.

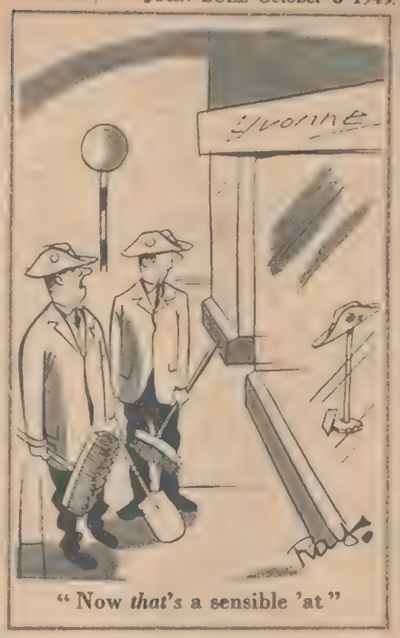
When I got back to my hotel I felt drunk. Excitement and triumph. I walked round and round the bedroom like a caged tiger. I felt like shouting and singing. In the end I couldn't stick it any longer and went out again, walked through the empty street for nearly an hour. I felt as if I should never be tired again.

I made plans and changed them ten times; I talked to Bénat, lectured Johnny, explained to Cousin Lewis, bought a house, introduced Alix, spent Clara's legacy, drove Alix about England; there was practically nothing I didn't picture in that hour.

BACK at the hotel again at last, I undressed and got into bed, but it was no good putting out the light. I sat there and chain-smoked until four. Then at last the light off and sleep for a couple of hours.

At seven I got up, had a bath and shaved, sat on my balcony watching the morning sun gilding the streets and sucking the vapour out of the night clouds. I had an early breakfast on the balcony, drinking cup after cup of coffee while the sun crept round, warming my feet, showing up the dust on the balcony rail. Charles wouldn't be back till ten at the earliest. Then an hour to talk it all out. Quarter to eight now. Three hours at the very least.

The maid dropped the papers into my letterbox and a couple of letters with them. One was the hotel bill, the other was Cousin Lewis telling me that Old Hampden had had a stroke and was likely to be an invalid for the rest of his life. There'd have to be some rearrangement of the firm now, said the letter. There was far too much work and responsibility for one principal; I ought to think over my position very seriously; did I feel well



"Now *that*'s a sensible 'at"

enough to put a term to my holiday and settle in as a full partner or was I prepared to see a new man brought in from outside?

Have patience, Cousin Lewis; I'm on my way. Two, three, four or five days: just as long as it takes Alix to get ready.

Oh, Lord, is it really going to come off? Does she love me or have I hypnotized her into thinking so? I don't believe that. I'm almost sure not; but if I have, then, by God, I'll go on hypnotizing her for the rest of her life. For the first time I began to have some understanding of men who had chucked away everything for a woman—the sort of classic love stories that make the dullest films. I knew what they felt like anyway.

I HADN'T patience to do more than glance at the headlines of the news. Everything was in a mess as usual. I couldn't help it. My personal crisis loomed like Mount Everest. At nine thirty I decided to go and collect the car from the De la Rue Garages, and stuffed the papers and letters in my pocket. But at the street door I stopped and went back. If by some mischance Alix decided to ring up early I wasn't going to miss it. It was a bit like waiting for a call from her after the murder. Somewhere was the uncomfortable suspicion that she might disappear again.

At ten thirty I smoked my last cigarette, but now my nerve was gone and I didn't go out for more. Now it might come any time. But it didn't come.

Watch the clock round to eleven fifteen. A great temptation to ring her up, but silly to get in a panic for a quarter of an hour. Mustn't look as if I didn't trust her. Probably Charles was late getting home. If he drove up from Toulon he might not get there before lunch. Or something had delayed him.

At eleven thirty I phoned down for some cigarettes and checked up that no call had come for me. There hadn't been The porter brought the cigarettes, a particularly poisonous brand, but I don't think it would have made much difference if they'd been brown paper.

At a quarter to twelve the phone tried to ring, but I had it off before it properly got going.

"Is that you, Giles?"

"Yes, is that. . . ." I stopped.

"This is Claire, darling. How nice of you to answer so promptly."

I said: "Oh, hallo."

"How are you? We haven't seen *anything* of you for nearly a fortnight. It's neglectful, dear boy. Have you been enjoying yourself so much?"

I said: "I'm frightfully sorry, Claire;

I wouldn't call it enjoying myself altogether. . . ."

"Anything we could help you in?"

"Well—no, I don't think so. It's kind of you to offer. How's Walter?"

"Rather hurt about his new car. It's got a gadget missing or something. We were wondering if you'd like to come on Sunday again. Nothing grand this time. Just ourselves and a few family friends."

"It's *very* nice of you. I don't think I can manage this Sunday. Next perhaps. Could I ring you in a day or two?"

"Do. Of course." She went on and on. I knew Claire. Normally a rational talker, the sight of a telephone did things to her so that she never knew how to end a conversation and ring off. This morning it took me ten minutes by the clock to get away without offending her deeply. The second she'd gone I picked up the phone again and asked the hotel operator to get me the number of the Villa Lavandou.

Mid-day already. I thought: what's wrong?

The bell went.

"Hallo."

"You're through."

"Villa Lavandou?"

"Yes, m'sieu." It was the manservant.

"M. Gordon here. I want to speak to Mme Delaisse."

"I'm sorry, m'sieu. Mme Delaisse is out."

"Out? Can you tell me where she's gone?"

"No, m'sieu. She went out half an hour ago. But we're expecting her for lunch."

"Oh. . . . I see. Is M. Bénat back?"

"Yes, m'sieu. I don't know if he is in the house at the moment. D'you wish to speak to him?"

"No. It doesn't matter, thank you."

I rang off. Perhaps she was coming down to see me; that seemed the most likely thing. But they were expecting her back to lunch. I hadn't wanted to speak to Bénat until I heard from her. Wait. Have patience. Take a cigarette, just for a change; or write to Cousin Lewis. If you can't concentrate on that, at least write a cheque for your hotel bill. Wait. They also serve.

She might be here any minute. "Don't let me go," she'd said. I should have held her to that, made her spend the night at some place in Nice, kept a close hold on her. The change was too sudden. She'd slipped back. Perhaps if I saw her again she'd look at me blankly, like a stranger, deny last night had ever happened.

WHAT the devil was I so jumpy for? In a minute she'd be here. Then I'd have to pretend confidence, as if I'd never doubted at all.

The phone rang.

"Hallo," I said.

"Giles Gordon?" said a man's voice.

"Yes."

"This is Charles. Charles Bénat."

"Yes. I thought so."

"Alix asked me to ring you. We've had a long talk this morning. She explained what happened last night."

"Oh, yes." My throat was a bit dry.

"Frankly my first reactions weren't very favourable."

"I'm not awfully surprised."

"On principle I've nothing against you, Gordon. But I think the whole thing's been rather rushed and I'm not satisfied she's as much in love with you as she thinks."

"Isn't that really for her to decide?"

"Ultimately, yes. But it's my duty to stop her plunging into another unfortunate marriage like the last. If you'd heard her talking about you even as recently as Monday you wouldn't have thought her likely to make you a suitable wife."

A drop of extra poison. "I'm willing to take the risk."

"No doubt. The point is whether I'm willing to let you take it. Of course she's her own mistress, but I can raise certain obstacles. I'd like to talk the whole thing over with you."

"Gladly."

"You realize, I suppose, that she's not very—stable."

"I realize she hasn't grown up in a stable world."

"It's more than that. One doesn't like to say it, but . . . sudden impulses which sway her first this way and then that. It makes her difficult to rely on from one day to the next. You must have realized that yourself. Last year she almost admitted her love for you, this year she hated you. Now . . . well. . . ."

I began to get a bit hot. "Are you trying to tell me she's not in her right mind?"

"Don't be silly. You're not trying to understand. I want to talk this over in a quiet way."

"Then we should meet."

"I was going to suggest it. Preferably all three of us. What are you doing today?"

"Nothing."

"Then, let me see, I've an appointment at . . . can you come up to the Villa Lavandou late this afternoon—say about six?"

"I can."

"Very well, we'll talk it over then. . . ."

I said: "Before you ring off I'd like a word with Alix."

"She's not here. She asked me to ring for her."

"All the same I'd like to speak to her."

"My dear man, she's gone off somewhere in a huff. You'll see her, I promise you, when you come up. We'll have it all out then."

So with that I had to make do. I went out and had an early lunch, thought of looking up John, but in the end decided against it. This was no day for the social call.

Charles's objections were quite natural. In fact, they were less vehement than I'd expected. He objected, but in reasonable terms, and might yet possibly be won over.

There was nothing in what he said I could jib at. Like a reasonable man he proposed a discussion between the three of us. I had nothing to fear from discussion. Then what was there to fear?

After lunch I took out the car. It was a smallish Pugeot of uncertain vintage. The engine was in quite good condition but had a disagreeable habit of dying on you as soon as you declutched, and no amount of adjustment of the carburetter would cure it.

I drove along the Promenade des Anglais and chain-smoked and watched people bathing, but didn't feel in the mood for it myself.

A man came past with the afternoon editions, and I bought a paper and glanced through it idly. There was nothing new and I dropped it on the seat, then sharply picked it up again as a small paragraph caught my eye.

It ran:

> *A well-known café in Villefranche was raided in the early hours of this morning by the police, acting on the instructions of the Service de Sûreté. Several arrests were made including, it is understood, one woman, who was a prominent member of the resistance movement during the Occupation. Charges will be preferred against the arrested persons for illegal traffic in gold.*

There followed some stuff about the new drive which was being made against the black market, but I'd read enough. So some of my Villefranche friends were in trouble after all. It was a shock. Rather disturbing today of all days. In spite of Charles's self-confidence, Deffand had been able to make a move. I wished now I'd dropped a rather more obvious hint to Alix about it.

This raid had been last night—perhaps

Continued on page 27

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NIGHT WITHOUT STARS

Continued from page 25

in progress while I was talking to Alix. Would Charles and Alix know about it? Obviously. But his self-confidence evidently remained. There'd been no hint of anxiety in his voice, and he was prepared to spend this evening arguing a domestic matter with Alix and me.

The development both complicated my case and made it more urgent. If Deffand was on the kill it was all the more important to get Alix away, however sure of himself Charles might be. Possibly all the strings were cut between the Café des Fourmis and the Villa Lavandou, but I didn't trust Deffand's long thin nose.

By now it was getting too hot in the car, so I drove back to the hotel, had a shower, put on clean clothes and brewed a cup of tea. One never really appreciates tea except on the Continent where it's hard to get. At five I was off.

On the way to Cagnes the car began to wander about the road, so I got out and found the off front tyre nearly flat. It just took me to a garage, and I stopped and had the wheel changed. I was ahead of time, so let them repair the tyre before going on.

The garage was just in Cagnes and I bought another paper to see if there was any later news, but it was the same paragraph about Villefranche. I was uneasy and wished it had happened any time but now.

The tyre was mended and stuck in the boot. I got going again.

From Cagnes, gently climbing the green wooded slopes towards Vence. It was twenty minutes to six now, so I should be almost dead on time.

Through Vence and branching off from the main road. The hairpin bends didn't seem so bad when you could see where you were going. Whatever happened I was no longer an invalid, a cripple, jogging along beside a French driver like a useless sack. That was what counted. Keep a sense of proportion.

Now the narrow bit, now another bend, now a slight drop in the road for a change. Across the other side of the valley among a bunch of trees were the chimneys and roofs of the Villa Lavandou. This bit of the road was nearly as bad as ever. They'd started repairing it and done about half and then left it.

But they hadn't altogether left it. As I got round the corner of the bluff I found about six workmen just giving up work and throwing a few things into a lorry.

The lorry was on the inside of the road and it wasn't as far in as it might have been, so I hooted and a man got into the lorry and drew it back a bit. Four of the others leaned on their spades to watch while a fifth, in blue trousers and a dirty singlet, beckoned me languidly on.

I thought the chap in the lorry might have been a bit more obliging because he'd only gone in a foot, while he could easily have backed a couple of dozen yards to a wider part. Anyway he lit the stub of a cigarette and sat waiting for me, so I went. I'd probably a good foot to spare but it felt about an inch and a half, with not being too sure of distance.

I got abreast of the lorry all right and could see my way clear, when I happened to glance at the lorry, which was on the blind side.

For a second I thought I'd stalled my engine, but realized that in fact the lorry had started to back and was keeping level with me. My eyes flicked forward and I saw the back of the lorry was going to touch my wing.

I braked and yelled. The wooden side of the lorry grated, jarred, pushed. My car shivered. I pressed the horn, yelled again; a great jolt; my front wheel had slipped. I grabbed the door, thrust it open, couldn't get out for lorry. Jolt. Back wheel. The sky was turning, cliffs moving away. Lorry left behind. Get out of door. The door faced the sky as I got out, and the car fell away and I fell with it. . . .

As it happened the drop beside the road was not a precipice but a slope covered with grassy stuff and trailing weeds. I stepped out of the car as it fell just too late to catch at the broken parapet of the road and so slid down this slope clutching wildly at grass and weeds—which would not stop me but made the rate of the slide pretty slow. Ahead the car rolled and crashed and then disappeared into silence. I, too, fell over the edge of something and there was a horrifying instant before I landed in a hazel bush which ended the fall. Then came the last crash of the car a long way down.

After that for a bit there was no more noise except for the crying of a frightened bird.

We'll meet this afternoon at six, Bénat said, discuss the matter then. Alix will be there as well. Perfectly reasonable. Nothing one could object to. All the time instinct hanging out the flags. Ignore instinct. Behave as a civilized person in a civilized society. After all, Pierre might have been killed, but Pierre was a despicable traitor. He got what was coming. Not an English gentleman. Not Giles Gordon, whose only error was an outsize curiosity and a tendency to overrate his own charm.

Little Alix must be protected from her own sentimentality. She'd made a fool of herself over Jacques Delaisse in spite of her brother's objections. Wouldn't do to let it happen again. Alix was Charles's girl. Little Alix had always been there in the past, ever since memory began. Alix was a part of himself, a separate and at times exasperating sort of person, yet tied by some post-natal cord—necessary to him and complementary. Little Alix must go to Dijon again while she got over her new infatuation.

Johnny had been right. Playing with fire. He might have needed his black tie after all. Might still. . . .

In a rage I tried to get out of the hazel bush—and looked down about two hundred feet on to grey-green treetops.

The shock of being so near the edge made me draw back. There was something glinting a good way down: a window perhaps or a door that had been smashed out. I thought, well, the carburettor won't be a trouble on that car any more.

I didn't seem to be hurt. When I looked round I began to see how lucky I'd been. Just here the cliff was in a series of limestone buttresses, one below the other, a slope and then a drop, a slope and then a drop. I'd come gently down the first slope, come over the first drop, which was small, and there stuck. It was a good job because this next slope was steeper than the last and much barer. Only under the protection of the cliff, where the soil could lodge, was there this thick growth of weeds and small bushes. I thought, perhaps there's something in the idea of luck averaging out. Four years ago, when the shell burst, the full blast had caught me, while the two nearer men got away with it. . . .

I'd lost my glasses. Thirsty and a bit dizzy, I looked round. The slope above ended about twelve or fifteen feet up, and the ragged edge overhung. I'd only fallen that far. Once on that slope, it might not be difficult to make the road, which was out of sight from here—careful handholds and footholds, testing the green stuff and the grass, inch by inch. But how to make a beginning? This was the shallowest point. Twenty yards on, the buttress ended abruptly, back it ran down, making the proportion of cliff to slope greater before it also petered out.

I carefully got up, and my head lurched. Something the matter with my eye? No, that seemed all right, thank God. Bump on the back of my head. Didn't remember that. On hands and knees again, I looked down, and the view made me feel pretty sick. There was no going down *this* slope—except the quick way. The bottom of the gorge was green enough, and between the trees was a stream and some goats grazing. Sun was brilliant in the valley, but this side was in the shade. Ten minutes after six. My watch was still ticking.

I lit a cigarette and was a bit surprised to find I could hardly hold the lighter steady.

Work it out. One couldn't climb *up*, unless one was a fly or twelve feet tall just to begin. Going farther round the buttress was impossible: one could only go back, following the bend in the cliff that the road followed. A hundred yards back the road made a sharp turn inward, where the cliff formation was V-shaped; and the road followed the inside of the V. It was a deep indentation in the side of the gorge. I began to make towards this round the foot of the first buttress, keeping well in to the wall and scrambling through the low-growing shrubs and stuff towards the corner. It was downhill and the cliff above me grew in size; still, it was movement, progress of a sort.

I got into the wind and the cigarette began to burn away at one side, so I chucked it down. There was a waterfall somewhere near: the hiss of it had grown louder as I came round. Here the buttress came to an end and the rest was more or less precipice; but it wasn't absolutely straight up and there were a good many ridges and clefts in the rock, one in particular being a sort of volcanic fissure starting practically in the corner and running at an angle across the cliff face to the bushes below the road.

I was still furious—it didn't make much sense, but that's the way I was—and it took me all my time not to try climbing the thing right away. I just had the sense to sit down and take a rest before making any definite move.

Think it out. Down below was the floor of the valley. No houses, no smoke, no road, no railway line. Only the goats. Did the farmer come to milk them? If he did, would he hear any shouts? Very unlikely. The stream added to the noise. The road then? But here the road wasn't quite on the edge. And who would come past but half a dozen cars a day, driving along in a cloud of dust? Sensible thing was to stay here one day, or two, or even three, until the search began or the car was found.

An ordeal, but safety at the end of it. Safe enough here in the meantime to think over the whole miserable business at leisure.

That fissure was a break in the cliff like a split in a tree. For the most part it looked about four feet wide at the mouth but here and there it was probably a good deal less. The angle wasn't at all bad, a bit steeper than forty-five degrees, and really only a very short distance to go—the road looked quite close. Not the sort of climb you would choose to make perhaps, but quite a reasonable one provided you kept your mind on the climb and not on the drop. A very different matter from any wildcat idea of getting up the cliff face.

The alternative was to sit and wait. I wasn't in the mood for waiting. It seemed a justifiable risk.

Any experienced climber would have made short work of it. I remember thinking I was lucky to have shoes with rubber soles on. I remember thinking, when I get to the top. . . : In fifteen minutes I shall be back on the road again. . . .

The way up to the root of the cleft was by a few small bushes and comfortable footholds. It was hot in spite of the wind. When I got to the cleft I was panting a bit.

I hastily pulled myself into it, because this was right over the precipice, and there was that hint of dizziness in my head which came from the first fall.

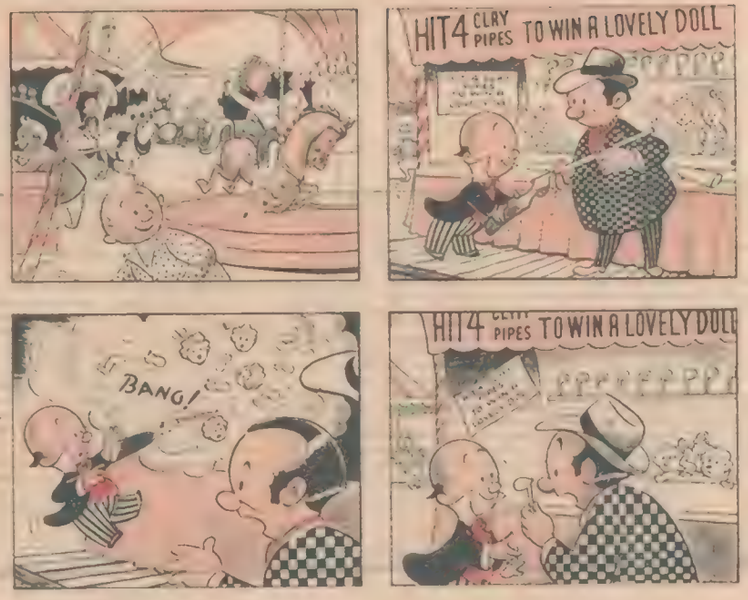
In this semi-shelter it was better, though not as comfortable as I'd expected. The fissure didn't slope the right way at the mouth. One could so easily slip out. I began to work slowly up it, with back and hands and knees like an old-time chimney-sweep.

There was a good deal of faded greenstuff at the edges and some etiolated plant life in its depths. At some seasons it might act as an additional escape for the water draining from the road and the cliffs. At about half-way I stopped to rest. Well over the precipice now. Sweat on face and hands. Wouldn't do. Rest a bit. I leaned back, wriggled out of my coat, took wallet, cigarettes, lighter, passport and pocket knife, put them in other pockets; and then like a damned fool threw the coat away. I leaned over frantically and grabbed it just before the wind got at it. The exertion made the sweat worse, not better.

But there was nothing to worry about now so long as I kept cool.

To be concluded next week

MR. DIMPLE



From the Pickles Album . . .

Wilfred's maternal grandmother: "She was not, in my day, the martinet she had been earlier"

Young Wilfred (on right) at the seaside: "Year in, year out, we went to Blackpool"

MY LIFE by WILFRED PICKLES

Continued from page 9

for he was like an animal in the way he roved the table with his eyes before tucking in with anxious, rather greedy gestures.

He belched openly, too, and that, above all else, disgusted my mother. It jarred on all of us, I think, although Aunt Polly would often merely comment on his eruptions with a remark like: "Fair i' my face, that wor!"

Presently they sailed for their new world. For a time my uncle took any job he could get, but his was a success story, for they settled down, bought their own house and lived well. As I write, Aunt Polly, now over eighty, is still living over there.

My grandmother was not, in my day, the martinet she had been earlier with her big family. My mother told me how the girls would bring home their wages and drop them into my grandmother's outstretched apron and how she would look at the collected pittances with an expression of resignation which said: "How on earth are we going to manage?"

Cleared Decks For Wash Day

And, as if life were not uncomfortable enough, she would insist every Sunday night on having every bit of oilcloth in the house taken up from the flagged floor—they never boasted a carpet; a sort of clearing of the decks for the enormous washing-day job the next morning.

None of her daughters dared to stay out after nine o'clock and as the curfew hour approached she would sit outside the house, watchful and challenging. My memories of my grandmother are of a tall, gaunt woman in an unchanging garb of old-fashioned bonnet with black sequins and black cape.

One of my greatest joys was to go round to her every Wednesday. This was baking day when she would produce delicious flat cakes, sometimes known as oven-bottom cakes, and spread butter thickly on them. I would go off to eat mine in the living-room, with its dark mahogany sideboard and the horse-hair sofa which always pricked my knees when I knelt on it.

Of the three children of my Aunt Sarana (Sarah Hannah), Harry was my favourite and we became great friends. Most men remember the young pal who shared the secret of their first clandestine smoke; Harry was my fellow-conspirator in that escapade, as he was in so many others.

In fact, he went into the shop to buy the Woodbines and I agreed, too readily it proved, to look after them. My mother found them in my pocket and that meant another rough passage!

My red hair was a big liability in those days and I got the blame for every bit of mischief that was discovered. My first pal was another redhead.

I think we must have been about five when we first teamed up together. Edmund Durkin was one of an Irish family, neighbours of ours, in Conway Street. If anything went wrong with anybody or at any point down the whole length of Conway Street, we were the immediate suspects.

Trapped In Dustbin Alley

Perhaps the biggest commotion of all was caused when we decided to see what we could find in the ash-bins which in those days were wooden containers something like beer barrels, only taller, and stored behind a line of filthy doors in the alleyways between some of the houses.

Knowing we would be in for it if we were discovered, I shut the door after following Edmund into the dark interior into which only a few shafts of light penetrated. Soon the stench got too much for us.

"There's nowt 'ere," said Edmund resignedly. "Come on then," I agreed, and made to open the door. But it was fast!

We tugged and pushed and made efforts within the confined space to charge at it.

Outside the whole street was up and about, searching. I find it hard to remember how we felt at the time, or what we talked about, but it was a great relief when somebody heard our faint call and pushed open the door to let in some fresher air. Our confinement in that stinking midden was enough for me: I never investigated it again.

I was eight years old when my brother George was born in Essex Street, and soon after the birth we all moved to the most exciting home of my childhood—an attractive rural cottage in the tiny village of Warley, which seemed to be right in the heart of the countryside, though it was only two-and-a-half miles out of Halifax. It had one chapel, one pub, a fountain where the maypole used to be, a Co-op store, a greengrocery shop and a grocers.

But continually our landlord told my parents he wanted to return to the house himself and was giving us notice to leave.

We took a house which stood exactly between Conway Street and Essex Street in Summergate Place, and I returned to Parkinson Lane Council School. My brother Arthur had proved a capable student and was attending the Grammar School at Rishworth after being awarded a scholarship.

It was a boarding school and to keep Arthur there meant a great strain on my parents' resources. I remember how my mother used to visit him and come back with only a penny in her purse.

George was about four years old when we moved to 10 Summergate Place, and one of the incidents which stand out in my early life was his illness.

His bed had to be brought downstairs. One day the doctor said he would like a second opinion and called in a specialist who diagnosed pneumonia.

I remember the arrival of long tubes of oxygen and the way we all crept about the house as if afraid that the slightest noise would bring a great tragedy.

My parents sent Arthur and me to stay with Aunt Sarana. At three o'clock that same afternoon, one of my aunts called to say that George had died.

My Terrible Experience

I hurried home and had the terrible experience of seeing my father cry for the first time. My mother was not so demonstrative; there were no tears and she went quiet and almost expressionless, like a statue. But I knew that she was feeling it much more than the people who were able to cry.

I was detailed to take the news to my grandmother and I ran all the way to her house. By now, the sadness and the experience of seeing my mother and father in such trouble had started to react on me.

Upset, and almost breathless, I told her what had happened and added: "I'll never get over this, Gran'ma."

She put her arm round my shoulder, pulled me towards her, and said quietly and firmly: "Ay, lad, but tha will."

It was a lesson about life I have never forgotten, for people do get over troubles like this. My grandmother knew it then. She had been through it all, suffered all the emotions my mother and father and I were experiencing at that time.

I was thought to be too young to attend the funeral and I was pleased that it should be so, but concerned that my mother should be out of my sight for the time they were at the burial. I did not like the way she was taking it, her manner was too quiet. Thus it came almost as a relief when they returned and I found her alone, crying quietly.

My father tried to forget his loss by seeking his old friends for company. The men at the club were still saying: "Ay, yon Fred Pickles is a scream" and, as I was passing a group of them one day, I heard one of them declare: "He ought to be on t' stage. He's funnier than any turn at t' Palace."

Three Of Us Round The Fire

Yet he had spasms of wholehearted sympathy, generosity and kindliness and for long spells he would not go out at all in the evenings. On these occasions he would sit with my mother and me round the fire, reading John Hartley's stories of Yorkshire folk.

I would look from my father as he read, across to my mother, cosily occupied knitting our underclothes, and then across the room, where the flickering flames of the fire were reflected on the wall, making it a backcloth to the pair of bronze ornamental horses which reared actively on the sideboard.

I was a homer then, no less strongly than I am today. Nothing could shake my conviction that the hearth should be the centre of the affections but not the boundary. My father drew his boundary far too wide for my liking and his friends were an ever-present magnet, pulling stronger sometimes than at others, but always likely to draw him away from that hearth which meant so much to me.

We would know when the pull had taken effect. My father would come home from work, gulp his tea without more than a few words to both of us, and start to whistle as he went over to the sink to wash. My mother and I avoided looking

Continued on page 30

THIS WEEK'S COVER

MILLIONS listening to Wilfred Pickles's broadcasts must have wondered what a *Have A Go!* session is really like. This reconstruction of the scene was painted by W. E. Narraway and inspired by Pickles's famous question, "Are ye courtin', lass?" Like Wilfred Pickles, Narraway is a Yorkshireman, but he had never met the comedian until this picture brought them together.

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"THE most thrilling weekend of my life—I wouldn't have missed it for anything!" That's what Mrs. A. C. Bagrie, a Glasgow reader, thought of the round of entertainment she enjoyed with JOHN BULL'S other guests at *Bullets* 36th birthday celebrations last autumn.

This week's top prize, still further increased to £850, includes a double invitation to this year's party, as do the other chief awards. There are 100 birthday cheques all waiting to be won, as well as a £100 television installation.

Post your coupon below by Monday, Oct. 17.

Sight-seeing in Trafalgar Square, here are *John Bull's* guests at last year's *Bullets* birthday party. "We were just like a big happy family!" one of them said.

"Bullets" Winners 1,697

FIRST PRIZE, £350 plus extra Award as offered: R. E. Baker, 58 Anstey Road, Alton, Hants:

A FLYING LEAP AND WRIGHTS HOPPED *Brabazon's Length!*

SECOND PRIZE, £50: C. Buglass, 17 Store Row, Cambois, Blyth: WE KNOW IT'S TICK, BUT—*You* BORROWED *Time*, SAM!

THIRD PRIZE, £25: H. Alden, 2 Chatham Avenue, Manvers Street, Hull: AS SOON AS SHE BEWITCHES—YOU, THE BROOMSTICK'S YOURS!

OTHER AWARDS: £20: G. M. Gibson, 250 Nicholson Street, Glasgow, C.5: GERMANY—WANTED "ROOM"—GOT "LODGERS." £15: A. G. Rich, 50 Prospect Road, Stourport-on-Severn: MAN IN A HURRY—SAM, ORDERING BRITISH "JETS." £14: L. T. Law, 263 High Road, Willesden Green, N.W.10: BUREAU TO SPARE—IN POLITBURO, FOR POLLITT? £13: R. Jeffery, 37 Aylesford Road, Liverpool, 13: NEARER AND NEARER—MOON—BUT EAST, WEST? £12: Miss E. M. Bowie, 276 Badsley Moor Lane, Rotherham: GERMANY—"HANDCUFFED" BETWEEN QUARRELLING "POLICEMEN." £11: K. Ackroyd, 83 Devonshire Street West, Keighley: CARRYING THE LOAD—OF *Empty* TRAIN, TAXPAYER. £10: E. E. Channell, 131 Cliveden Road, Chester: NEARER AND NEARER—GRANDPA'S GLASS EYE, HYPNOTIST!

For next ten winners see last week's "*Bullets*" *Bulletin*.

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XWORD 649 RESULT

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Awards value £25 for 1st Runners-up shared by 26 entrants. Useful "Signpost" Prizes awarded to 2nd Runners-up.

RULES

1. First Prize for best *Bullet* received. Others in order of merit—the test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.
2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.
3. As entry-fee, enclose P.O. or stamps as indicated on coupon. Fee submitted will be taken to cover *Bullets* in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are allowed. If using P.O. make payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated. Forces half-rate for *Bullets* and Crosswords for entry-fees not exceeding 2s. if coupons personally completed and Service rank indicated.
4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests in *Bulletin* and *Gazette* dated Nov. 5 and in JOHN BULL dated Nov. 12, also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

ADD 2, 3 or 4 WORDS to any of these "EXAMPLES"

To make a *Bullet*, add simply TWO, THREE or FOUR words of apt and original comment to any of the *Examples* on right. To use an incomplete *Example*, first complete it with any one word in place of dotted line—then make your *Bullet* as usual.

The Old Lion	Exploded
Lesson For The World	Didn't Like It
Traveller Cripps	Sandy's Petrol
Our Way	Kicking Himself
Milk Of Human Kindness	Turned Out
	The Doctor Sighed And
That Gap	**Incomplete "Examples" —see instructions**
Struggling Man	
Armed To The Teeth	In Everybody's.....
Scientist's Baby	Must Be Very.....
To Escape	What.....Can Do
Mum And Dad	.....Of Today
The Blunt Truth	Went To The.....
A Monster	She'd Be.....If
For The Best	

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Across Clues XWORD 654

1. Fast ones fall the sooner
3. It's natural one should get bird
5. You aren't surprised if hot water makes them split
8. Doesn't get so much for his sugar as he would like to
10. Commonly deal with merchandise
12. It's quite natural for a man to like his own
13. Act may be regarded as

Down Clues

1. These should be covered
2. This may be part of ceremony
3. Safety regulations are occasionally revised as the result of one
4. It's rude to do this at fellow traveller in train
6. When it's over, you often wake up sadly disillusioned
7. If he hears these of weariness in audience, sensible speaker will be likely to cut his address
9. Many of them are stripped
11. Eccentric person often glories in wearing clothes that are

£100 XWORD

In adjudication, all Extra Answers will be read in combination with each other and with all Answers in your Square. Thus your completed Square with one extra Answer to *one* Clue will represent *two* full Squares (Entry-fee 6d.), Square with one extra Answer to *two* Clues will represent *four* full Squares (Entry-fee 1s.), and Square with one extra Answer to *three* Clues will represent *eight* full Squares (Entry-fee 2s.). Use ink, not pencil.

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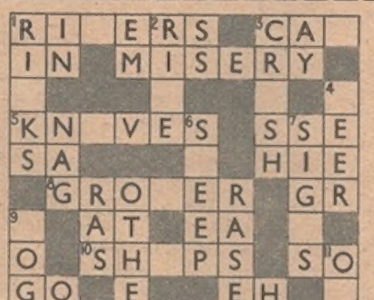

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654 Closing Postmark MON., OCT. 17

MY LIFE by WILFRED PICKLES

Continued from page 28

at each other and I felt a sadness welling up inside. Our evening was ended before it had begun.

We missed my father more because of his sparkling wit which kept us in fits of laughter often. And even after one of his nights out he would have us smiling at his impersonations of folk we knew, including our relations.

One example of his wit I remember quite clearly. We were walking in the country one day when the hunt came by, in full scarlet and with a large pack of hounds. Quite twenty minutes later, a solitary horseman rode by.

My father cocked an eye towards him and grinned: "One man's meet," he said.

Never Complained

I never heard my mother complain about the time he spent away from home, but once, standing at the front door with her, I was reminded that she was thinking about it.

A local girl, recently married, stopped to gossip.

"I can't get Harold to go out at nights. He gets his feet up—and that's that," she said.

"You leave it as it is, love. My trouble is I can't get mine to stay in!" said my mother.

I believe I profited from close contact with so many relations in those early days in Halifax, a tough town breeding a rather stubborn, insular people.

But I found a depressing narrowness of outlook and resented my family's unquestioning judgment that everything they did must be right and anything to the contrary was to be condemned.

People who had coffee for breakfast were peculiar and not to be trusted, while the folk living on the other side of North Bridge had none of our earthy qualities, it was believed.

The Wider World

Bradford, eight miles away, was another world which could not be a nice place. Although I never visited Bradford until I was grown up I was already thinking, and as I grew older it became apparent to me, that there was something bigger than Halifax, a wider world in which minds could broaden—in short, a really expansive pond in which little frogs weren't made to feel much bigger than their actual size.

I was grappling with my first big personal problem—how to escape from this world of mean streets.

I loved the ordinary folk who had no illusions of grandeur, but I was nauseated by the vanity of the strutting little men who felt that fame in Halifax made them Napoleons.

NEXT WEEK: I become a shop boy

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